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India secures Olympic team quotas in archery

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NEET students march to Parliament, detained

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

More than two dozen students, some of them NSUI members, were detained while protesting against irregularities in NEET-UG and cancellation of UGC-NET exams here at Jantar Mantar on Monday.

The Congress-affiliated National Students' Union of India had planned a march to the Parliament on the day of the commencement of the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha.

The students, holding placards and NSUI flags, gathered in large numbers at Jantar Mantar for their 'Chhatra Sansad Gherav'.

Ahead of the protest, police barricaded the area to prevent students from taking out their march. Heavy deployment of Delhi police including paramilitary forces was made at the site.

According to visuals of the protest shared with media, some students tried to go past the barricades, while a few others climbed on the structure.

They were detained by the Delhi police and taken to different police stations, since no permission was granted for the march, an officer said.

- They were detained by the Delhi police and taken to different police stations.

Amid a demand for the cancellation of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for undergraduates (NEET-UG) exam held on May 5, the Union Education Ministry has said that the incidents of malpractices were "localised" or "isolated" and it was not fair to jeopardise the careers of lakhs of candidates who cleared the exam rightfully.

The CBI has filed an FIR in connection with the alleged irregularities under IPC sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 420 (cheating), among others.

The UGC-NET-2024 exam for the selection of junior research fellows, assistant professors and PhD scholars was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on June 18 in two shifts across the country.

The exam was postponed after the government said that the "integrity of the examination may have been compromised" —*PTI*

A man protests against NEET irregularities in Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

NEET row, Speaker issue dominate first day at LS

PM & Kharge trade barbs over Emergency; Oppn holds protest

INDIA bloc leaders show copies of the Constitution at the Parliament House complex on the first day of the 18th Lok Sabha session, in New Delhi, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha began today with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, taking oaths as Members of Parliament.

Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy, Chirag Paswan, Kiren Rijiju, Nitin Gadkari, and Mansukh Mandaviya also took oaths as members of the Lok Sabha.

Before the beginning of the first session of Lok Sabha, BJP MP Bhartruhari Mahtab was sworn in as the pro-tem Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha. The oath was administered by President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Lok Sabha Speaker will be elected on 26 June. On 27 June, President Murmu is scheduled to address a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament.

The opposition MPs of the INDIA bloc, meanwhile, reacted sharply to the appointment of the seven-time MP as the pro-tem speaker saying that the appointment deviates from the traditional practice of appointing the seniormost member.

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other INDIA bloc leaders staged a protest in front of the Gandhi statue in Parliament holding copies of the Constitution as a sign of their protest against the appointment of Mahtab as the pro-tem speaker.

> **In first 15 days of NDA! 1. Horrific train accident; 2. Terrorist attacks in Kashmir 3. The plight of passengers in trains 4. NEET scam; 5. NEET PG cancelled 6. UGC NET paper leak 7. Milk, pulses, gas, tolls and expensive 8. Forests blazing with fire; 9. Water crisis; 10. Deaths due to lack of arrangements during the heat wave**
>
> -Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

Along with this, the ongoing issue of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance (NEET)-UG exams dominated the first day of the Parliament session.

As Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan was taking oath as a member of the Parliament, the opposition MPs demonstrated their anger over the alleged irregularities in the NEET exams.

The House witnessed the slogans of 'NEET' being raised on the first day. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav attacked the ruling BJP over the NEET-UG row. He claimed that the BJP "gets exam papers leaked" to "please" its people.

Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge also came down heavily upon the Centre amid the ongoing row.

Congress President Kharge said Modi had used "customary words" more than necessary, while country was expecting his words on relevant issues. Kharge said the "arrogance" remains despite a defeat.

Modi utilised the customary event to take a swipe at Congress over the Emergency, calling it a "black spot" on democracy when the Constitution was "discarded".

Modi said the new generation will never forget the day when the Constitution of India was completely rejected by suppressing democracy and the country was turned into a prison. Opposition leaders hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "Emergency" remark on Monday, calling the 10 years of his government an "undeclared emergency".

"Narendra Modiji, you are giving advice to the Opposition. You are reminding us of the 50-year-old Emergency, but have forgotten the last 10 years of undeclared emergency, which was ended by the people," Kharge said in a post on X. Criticising Modi over the 'emergency' remark, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh took to social media platform X and wrote, "The non-biological PM is telling the Opposition: discussion, not disruption. INDIA is telling him: Attendance, not absence." —*PTI*

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NADDA NAMED LEADER OF HOUSE IN RAJYA SABHA

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

BJP president and Union minister Jagat Prakash Nadda has been named Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, official sources said on Monday.

Nadda replaces Union minister Piyush Goyal, who recently won the Lok Sabha election and took oath on Monday as a member of the Lower House of Parliament. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha. Besides Nadda, 11 other members of the Upper House of Parliament are in the Union Council of Ministers. —*PTI*

DIDI UPSET OVER EXCLUSION DURING INDO-B'DESH TALKS

KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, expressing "strong reservation" over the Centre excluding the state government from discussions with Bangladesh regarding Teesta water sharing and the Farakka Treaty.

Banerjee also urged Modi to not hold any such discussion with Bangladesh without involving West Bengal.

The letter, which was shot off in the wake of Modi's bilateral talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina in Delhi, followed Banerjee's reported displeasure expressed in close circles after details of the meet between the two heads. —*PTI*

RECRUITMENT EXAMS

SC junks Haryana's plea against extra marks policy

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Monday upheld a Punjab and Haryana High Court order quashing the Haryana government's policy of granting additional marks to its residents in recruitment exams.

Terming the Haryana government's policy a "populist measure", a vacation bench of Justice Abhay S Oka and Justice Rajesh Bindal refused to interfere with High Court order, which had held as unconstitutional the socioeconomic criteria prescribed by the Haryana government to grant additional marks to certain classes of candidates in state government jobs.

"After perusing the impugned judgment, we find absolutely no error in the impugned judgment. The special leave petitions are dismissed," the bench said. Justifying the policy, Attorney General R Venkataramani said the Haryana government introduced the grace marks policy to give opportunities to those who were deprived of the security of public employment.

PHOTO: PTI

Venkataramani also pointed to the high court's direction of reconducting written tests and said the application of socio-economic criteria took place after the written test stage and not upon the Common Eligibility Test (CET).

Meanwhile, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said that his government will consider filing a review petition or bringing a bill in the Assembly, hours after the Supreme Court upheld a high court order quashing the state's policy of granting additional marks to its residents in recruitment exams for government jobs. —*PTI*

Ram Temple's roof leaks 5 months after opening

AYODHYA, 24 JUNE

The Ram Mandir which was built in Ayodhya six months ago is now making news again after the temple's chief priest Acharya Satyendra Das stated that the roof of the mandir has started leaking from the ceiling amid the onset of monsoon. He added that water leakage started near the spot where the Ram Lalla idol is placed. "It is very surprising. So many engineers are here and the Pran Pratishtha was held on 22 January, but water is leaking from the roof. Nobody would've thought this," said the priest. He also stated that no drainage system in place. The Ram Temple in Ayodhya was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. —*Salar News*

Court asks RIys to pay ₹1L to man who lost his luggage

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Realising that there was negligence and deficiency in services by the Indian Railway, a consumer commission here directed its general manager concerned to pay more than Rs 1.08 lakh to a passenger whose luggage was stolen during a journey. The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (Central District) was hearing the complaint which said the passenger's bag containing valuables worth Rs 80,000 was stolen by some unauthorised passengers in January 2016 between Jhansi and Gwalior when he was travelling in a reserved coach of the Malwa Express. The commission said it had the jurisdiction to try the case as the man boarded the train from New Delhi. —*PTI*

K'taka bans food colouring for kebabs, fine up to ₹10L

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

After 'Gobi Manchurian' and 'Cotton Candy', the Karnataka government has now prohibited the use of artificial colouring agents in the preparation of kebabs (veg and non-veg) across the State, saying it adversely affected the public health.

In case of violation of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 rule 59, it can file a case in the court which can lead to imprisonment ranging from seven years to life term and a fine up to Rs 10 lakh, an official order stated on Monday.

According to the Food Safety and Quality department, the quality of kebabs being sold across the State were found to be "poor" due to addition of artificial colours, which can have serious impact on the health of public.

In the wake of media reports, samples of kebabs sold across the state were collected and tested in the state laboratories.

In an official order dated 21 June, the department stated that out of the 39 samples collected and tested in laboratories, eight were found to be unsafe due to usage of artificial colour (Sunset Yellow was found in seven samples while Sunset Yellow and Carmoisine was found in another sample). Citing the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, it said the usage of artificial colours is unsafe and hence, no such colouring agents shall be used as it can seriously affect the health of the consumer. —*PTI*

Kolar: 1 killed due to water contamination

KOLAR, 24 JUNE

A 65-year-old man died after drinking contaminated water in Minajenahalli village, Mulbagal taluk, Kolar district, on Monday. Meanwhile, six people were diagnosed with gastroenteritis symptoms. The contamination of water resulted from a damaged pipe. Two people are being treated at Mulbagal hospital, while another four are admitted to SNR District Hospital in Kolar.

According to District Health Officer G Jagadish, the contamination occurred as a water pipe, situated near a drain, broke a couple of days ago, allowing drain water to seep into the piped water. Unaware of the contamination, villagers consumed the water, leading to health issues.

PHOTO: PTI

- It is suspected that water supplied from an overhead tank may have mixed with contaminated water during pipeline construction.

Following the incident, health officials conducted a health check-up of the villagers and advised them to consume water from alternative protected sources for a few days as a precaution. The Gram Panchayat has started repair works on the damaged water pipe. Dr SN Vijayakumar of SNR Hospital said that the four patients admitted are stable. They will remain hospitalised until they have fully recovered. This incident follows a recent tragedy where six people, including a three-year-old, died and over 110 were hospitalised after consuming contaminated water in Tumakuru district. It is suspected that water supplied from an overhead tank may have mixed with contaminated water during pipeline construction. On 20 May, a 22-year-old youth died and 70 people fell sick after consuming contaminated water in K Salundi village on the outskirts of Mysuru. Following this, district health officials conducted inspections in the villages where people are heavily dependent on wells and water tankers. —*Salar News*

RESOLUTION PASSED

Kerala to soon be named Keralam?

T'PURAM, 24 JUNE

The Kerala Assembly on Monday unanimously adopted a resolution urging the Centre to officially change the state's name to 'Keralam'.

The Assembly passed the resolution for the second time because the Union Home Ministry, which reviewed the first resolution, suggested some technical changes.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who moved the resolution, wanted the union government to change the southern state's name from "Kerala" to "Keralam" in all languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of the country.

The resolution was accepted by both the members of the ruling LDF and the opposition Congress-led UDF **PHOTO: PTI**

Moving the resolution, the Chief Minister said the state was called 'Keralam' in Malayalam and that the demand to form a united Kerala for the Malayalam-speaking communities had strongly emerged since the time of the national freedom struggle.

It was the second time that the state assembly passed a resolution demanding a change in the name of the state.

The House had passed a similar unanimous resolution in August last year and submitted it to the Centre, but the Union Home Ministry suggested some technical changes in it, Assembly Secretariat sources here said.

After the presentation, the Chief Minister also said further examinations demanded some changes in the earlier resolution.

The resolution was accepted by both the members of the ruling LDF and the opposition Congress-led UDF. —*PTI*

Congress ministers again push for 3 more deputy CMs

Some in Cong say this is a plan by CM's camp

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

With demand for three more Deputy Chief Ministers once again coming to the fore, the State Congress Chief DK Shivakumar on Monday said the party's central leadership will take a call.

Some of the Ministers in the Siddaramaiah-led Cabinet have been pitching for deputy chief minister posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities.

Currently, Shivakumar from Vokkaliga community is only the Deputy Chief Minister in the cabinet.

A section within Congress is said to be of the opinion that statement by the Ministers was part of a plan by Siddaramaiah's camp to keep Shivakumar in check, amid talks he might seek the chief minister post after two-and-half years of this government's tenure and to counter his influence both in the government and party.

The Ministers who have pitched for three more Deputy Chief Ministers are considered close to Siddaramaiah.

Stating that when power is distributed all communities will show their liking towards the party and it will not be the case only if a few people enjoy power, Co-Operation Minister KN Rajanna said he had proposed a Deputy Chief Minister from Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities.

Minister for Housing BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan saw nothing wrong with the demand to have more Deputy Chief Ministers.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar during a press conference in Bengaluru on Monday **PHOTO: ANI**

Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa said, there is no quota for such posts in the Constitution, and the position is given based on one's capability. "Many Dalit leaders have the capability and based on that it should be given, not on quota."

Asked whether it was an attempt to weaken Shivakumar, he said, "No one can weaken any one. Whatever has to be decided will be ultimately decided by Congress high command...when I'm asked for my opinion, I will tell the party."

Earlier, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi too had spoken favouring the proposal, keeping the communities that have stood by the party in mind.

Congress had reportedly decided that Shivakumar will be "the only" Deputy Chief Minsiet amid stiff competition between him and Siddaramaiah for the Chief Minister's post after the Assembly election results in May last year.

It was also said to be a "commitment" made by the Congress leadership to Shivakumar while convincing him to give up his claim for the chief minister post and to take up the role of deputy chief minister. *—PTI*

EMBROILED IN CONTROVERSY

Suraj Revanna remanded to CID custody till 1 July

BENGALURU/ MYSURU, 24 JUNE

A court here on Monday remanded JD(S) MLC Suraj Revanna, who has been arrested in connection with a case of alleged sexual abuse of a man, in the custody of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) till 1 July.

Suraj Revanna, brother of former MP Prajwal Revanna who is facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, was arrested by police in Hassan on Sunday. The case was then handed over to the CID by State.

After shifting him to Bengaluru from Hassan, the CID had on Sunday night produced the 37-year-old before the 42nd Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court judge, who

PHOTO: X

remanded him in judicial custody for 14 days.

The police have filed an FIR against him under IPC sections 377, 342, 506 and 34 following a complaint filed by the 27-year-old, a JD(S) worker, who alleged that he was sexually assaulted on 16 June. After getting the case file, CID approached the court on Monday seeking his custody.

Suraj who is the eldest son of Holenarasipura MLA HD Revanna and grandson of former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, has categorically denied the charge. He had also alleged that JD(S) worker had filed a "false complaint" in a bid to extort Rs five crore from him.

JD(S) Legislative Council Member T Deve Gowda, the State core committee President said that the party would deliberate on the course of action against Revanna.

Responding to questions about Suraj's arrest, Gowda emphasised the party's stance on wrongdoing, stating, "If they do wrong, let it be punished. We will never stand for wrongdoers. Be it my son or my relatives, whoever has done wrong is wrong."

—Salar News with PTI

Prajwal Revanna **PHOTO: FB**

PRAJWAL SENT TO JUDICIAL CUSTODY FOR 2 WEEKS

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

A court here on Monday remanded former MP Prajwal Revanna, who was arrested on charges of rape and sexual abuse against several women, to 14 days judicial custody.

As his custody under the Special Investigation Team (SIT), which is probing the cases, ended on Monday, he was produced before the court, which remanded him to judicial custody.

The 33-year-old grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda had failed in his bid to retain the Hassan parliamentary constituency in the recent polls.

SIT officials arrested Revanna soon after he landed at Bengaluru Airport from Germany on 31 May.

He had left for Germany on 27 April, a day after Hassan went to the polls. A 'Blue Corner Notice' seeking information on his whereabouts had earlier been issued by the Interpol, following a request by the SIT via the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Revanna has been booked in three cases of sexual assault. There are also charges of rape against him. *—PTI*

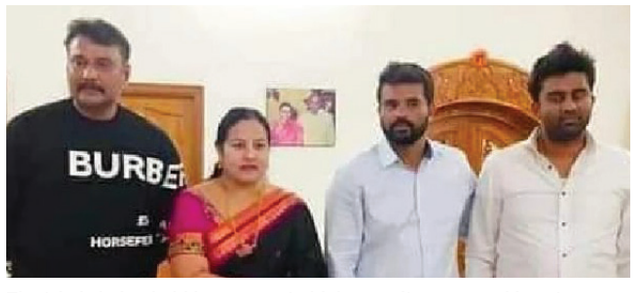
High security in Parappana Agrahara as it now houses Darshan, Prajwal & Suraj

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Parappana Agrahara Central Prison has beefed up security on Monday as it now houses three high-profile individuals—Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, ex-MP Prajwal Revanna and JD(S) MLC Suraj Revanna.

The trio is being held in a separate high-security room and is not allowed to interact with other prisoners.

Darshan was arrested along with 16 others in the Renukaswamy murder and has been in police custody since 11 June. Meanwhile, Prajwal and his brother Suraj are facing sexual abuse



The trio is being held in a separate high-security room and is not allowed to interact with other prisoners **PHOTO: SALAR**

allegations.

Sources within the jail confirmed that Darshan and his associates - Pradush, Vinay, and Dhanraj - are housed in one of the six special security rooms. These rooms are distinct from those holding the general prison population.

—Salar News

CID takes over probe in BBA student murder

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has ordered a Crime Investigation Department (CID) investigation into the mysterious death of Prabhupada, a BBA student from a college in Basavanagudi, which occurred on 15 May. The incident happened under the jurisdiction of the Subramanyapura police station in Bengaluru South. This decision followed an appeal from KR Soumya, a social worker and the mother of the deceased, who met the Chief Minister alongside a delegation of fellow social workers. Initial report suggests that the circumstances surrounding Prabhudda's death were unclear, with initial reports suggesting suicide. However, Soumya maintained that her daughter was murdered. Presuming that Prabuddha was dead, the juvenile slashed her wrist and throat at her residence in Brindavan Layout, Padmanabhanagar to stage it as a suicide, police said.

—Salar News

87% City professionals plan to upskill in FY25

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

While India averages 85 per cent, nearly 87 per cent of professionals in Bengaluru and Chennai have expressed their intent to invest in upskilling in FY25, according to a report released by an ed-tech company on Monday.

The report has also identified that the intent to upskill among freshers has increased by eight percentage points, standing at 83 per cent this year as compared to 75 per cent in FY24.

Great Learning, a global ed-tech company, has released the report - 'Upskilling Trends Report 2024-25.'

"Among key sectors, the intent to upskill in FY25 was highest among professionals from manufacturing, engineering, capital goods, and BFSI. Data science, AI and machine learning emerged as the most preferred domains professionals are looking to upskill," said Hari Krishnan Nair, co-founder of Great Learning.

According to the report, nearly 79 per cent of the surveyed professionals – and 92 per cent of those with over 17 years of experience – cite upskilling as crucial for career growth. *—PTI*

MEET-AND-GREET

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan with Shantinagar MLA NA Haris at Jashn e Eid al-Ghadir in Masjid-E-Askari, Richmond Town on Monday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Chikkaballapur farmers protest against milk adulteration scam

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 24 JUNE

Farmers' protests erupted in Chikkaballapur's Ajjavara village after a milk adulteration scam was uncovered at Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) dairy on Monday. Muniraju, the secretary, and Munikrishna, the clerk, allegedly diluted milk supplied by farmers and embezzled funds over four months. By increasing the quantity of milk through dilution, they collected an additional Rs 4.7 lakh, which was subsequently siphoned off into benami accounts and those of their relatives. A farmer named Harisha noticed irregularities in milk collection and payments and alerted the Ajjavara Village Milk Producers' Cooperative Association.

Infuriated by the deceit, farmers protested in front of the Ajjavara KMF milk cooperative society dairy with their milk cans. They demanded that the embezzled funds be returned and called for action against the corrupt officials.

The association President, Keshav, assured them that efforts are underway to recover the money.. *—Salar News*

Farmers protesting with milk cans **PHOTO: SALAR**

ED RAIDS 11 LOCATIONS IN B'LURU, MYSURU

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday conducted simultaneous searches at the residences and offices of prominent builders in the City. The raids were carried out at 11 locations including UB City, Kingfisher Tower, Malleswaram, Basaveshwaranagar, Bannerghatta Road, Hanumanthanagar, and two locations in Mysuru.

This action prompted after the ED received the complaints of cheating, illegal transactions, and property tax payment irregularities from local civic authorities. ED began the searches in the early morning, targeting houses and offices. The builders were accused of cheating customers under the pretext of providing property sites, irregularities in property deeds, undervaluing real estate properties, and evading tax registration. ED conducted similar raids at eight locations in Bengaluru on 29 February and 1 March related to a money laundering case and seized Rs 11.5 crore and various documents.

—Salar News

RaGa should apologise for his grandmom's 1975 Emergency: BJP

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

State BJP workers protested on the 49th anniversary of 1975 Emergency imposed by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi, at Freedom Park in the City, on Monday.

BJP leaders also demanded a formal apology from Congress MP Rahul Gandhi for an "illegal and unconstitutional" act.

Leader of the Opposition in Karnataka Legislative Assembly R Ashoka demanded that Rahul should publicly apologise at Ramlila Maidan for the actions of his grandmother.

Reflecting on his personal experience during the Emergency, Ashoka said, "I was a first-year PUC student at VV Puram College when I participated in an RSS-led protest at Yeshwanthpur Circle against Indira Gandhi. For shouting a couple of slogans, the police arrested and tortured me. My family had to go into hiding. I was detained for a month in Freedom Park jail, where the conditions were dire, with one toilet for 200 people and insufficient food. These experiences remain vivid in my memory. They overrode the judiciary, detained journalists and prominent leaders such as LK Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee."

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has declared that the Constitution is as sacred as Bhagavad Gita to BJP, but Congress has repeatedly tampered with it," Ashok added.

Former minister, CN Ashwath Narayan echoed similar sentiments. "Congress is known for being anti-constitutional. They have been 'anti-Ambedkar'. They amended all the articles to protect their interests and do not stand for the protection of the Constitution," he stated.

The protesters were detained by the police to maintain public order.

—Salar News

Man attacked while taking selfie with captured leopard

MYSURU, 24 JUNE

A man was injured after he was attacked by a leopard while taking a selfie in Mysuru on Monday. The incident took place in Yalahalli when the victim, Jayashankar, got too close to the captured leopard. The big cat had reportedly strayed into the village. Villagers found the leopard hiding in an abandoned house and locked it inside to contain it. Forest officials, led by Range Forest Officer Nitin Kumar, captured the animal after a four-hour operation using tranquillisers. However, following the capture, Jayashankar disregarded safety measures and approached the sedated leopard for a selfie. Jayashankar is undergoing treated at KR Hospital. Forest officials have relocated the leopard to a remote forest area.

—Salar News

17 newly elected MLCs take oath

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Seventeen newly elected legislators, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah of Congress and former BJP national General Secretary CT Ravi, on Monday took oath as Members of Legislative Council.

Eleven of them were elected unopposed by Members of Legislative Assembly, while three each from graduates' and teachers' constituencies emerged victorious in polls earlier this month.

Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil were among those present at the event.Of the 17, Yathindra, Balkhees Banu, NS Boseraju (Minister), K Govindraj (Siddaramaiah's political adviser), Vasanth Kumar, Ivan D'Souza and Jagdev Guttedar (all Congress), and BJP's CT Ravi, N Ravi Kumar, and MG Mule; and JD(S)' TN Javarayi Gowda were all declared elected unopposed on 6 June.

Chandrashekar Basavaraj Patil and Ramoji Gowda of Congress and Dhanjaya Sarji of BJP were elected from graduates' constituencies.

—PTI

Bomb hoax creates panic at Kalaburagi airport

KALABURAGI, 24 JUNE

Tension prevailed at the Kalaburagi airport after the staff received a bomb threat via email on Monday, which turned out to be a hoax after a thorough search operation, police said.

The police added that the bomb disposal and dog squads were immediately pressed into action on the airport premises.

Kalaburagi Police Commissioner Chethan R told PTI that the Airport Director Chilaka Mahesh received an email from an anonymous ID on Monday morning claiming that explosives have been planted inside the airport premises.

"As soon as we received information about a bomb threat email at Kalaburagi domestic airport, a bomb disposal squad was dispatched. All the passengers on the flight (which landed from Bengaluru) were de-boarded and were shifted to safer place along with the staff," he said.

After hours of search operation, the police declared that the threat was a hoax as no "suspicious" object was found.

—PTI

LACK OF 'VALID REASON'

HC cuts jail sentence of POCSO accused

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

The High Court has reduced the sentence of an accused in a POCSO Act case from life imprisonment to 10 years, emphasising the need for valid reasons when imposing the maximum penalty.

The accused, a 27-year-old man from Chikkamagaluru, had his appeal partially allowed by a bench consisting of Justices Sreenivas Harish Kumar and CM Joshi. However, the court increased his fine from Rs 5,000 to Rs 25,000.

Reportedly, in 2016, the accused befriended and

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

repeatedly sexually assaulted a minor girl. The girl's mother filed a complaint in December 2016 after finding that her daughter was pregnant.

A DNA test confirmed the accused as the biological father. The police registered an FIR and filed a chargesheet.

On 11 June, 2018, a special court in Chikkamagaluru sentenced the accused to life imprisonment under Section 6 of the POCSO Act and imposed a Rs 5,000 fine.

The accused challenged the verdict in High Court, arguing that the girl's age had not been proven with proper documents.

The division bench noted that the oral testimony suggested the girl's consent, although it was legally irrelevant given her actual age of 12 at the time of the incident.

The bench remarked that this indication of consent opposed the imposition of the maximum sentence under POCSO Act.

It concluded that the special court had not provided sufficient reasons for imposing the maximum life sentence.

According to the law as it stood on the date of the crime, Section 6 of the POCSO Act allowed for a minimum sentence of 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and a maximum of life imprisonment.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Stalin writes to Centre on SL arrest of 22 fishermen

CHENNAI, 24 JUNE

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Monday wrote to Centre seeking immediate steps to release 22 fishermen and their boats arrested by Sri Lanka. Writing to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Stalin referred to continuing loss of livelihood for fishermen due to 'incidents of arrest and intimidation' by Sri Lanka and said that on 22 June, twenty-two fishermen from Rameswaram fishing harbour were apprehended by the island nation along with their three mechanised fishing boats. "I request you to ensure the immediate release of the apprehended fishermen and their boats. I would also like to inform that permission is yet to be granted for the salvage boats and crew for bringing back the released boats from Sri Lanka. *—PTI*

Cong leaders seek removal of Mumbai city chief Gaikwad

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

As many as 16 senior leaders of the Mumbai Congress have demanded that its city unit chief Varsha Gaikwad be replaced so as to strengthen the organisation ahead of the Maharashtra assembly polls due in October. They feel that Gaikwad, who recently won the Mumbai North Central Lok Sabha seat, will not have time to work at the organisational level and have objected to her style of functioning. Signatories of the letter include Rajya Sabha MP and Congress Working Committee member Chandrakant Handore, former city party chiefs Janardhan Chandurkar and Bhai Jagtap, senior leaders Naseem Khan, Suresh Shetty, Madhu Chavan, Charansingh Sapra, Zakir Ahmed and Maharashtra Congress treasurer Amarjit Manhas. *—PTI*

Kerala's financial crisis created by Centre: Fin Min

T'PURAM, 24 JUNE

Kerala government on Monday accused the Centre of adopting a stand against the country's federal structure and said it was the reason for the acute financial crisis the state has been suffering for some time. It is a "financial plight" artificially created by the Union government, state Finance Minister KN Balagopal alleged. KIIFB is a government agency in Kerala that finances infrastructure projects by raising funds from the markets. Despite all the adverse situations, the KIIFB could spend Rs 29,100 crore on various projects, he said. The Left government aimed at implementing infrastructure projects to the tune of Rs 50,000 crore through KIIFB. So far, 1,110 projects worth Rs 86,143.49 crore have been sanctioned by the board in various sectors, including tourism, transportation, education, IT, health, and so on, he added. *—PTI*

NEET row: CBI gets 5 more malpractice cases

There are 6 cases so far; 18 arrests have been made in Bihar, Rajasthan and Maharashtra

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

CBI has taken over the investigation of five new cases of alleged malpractices in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG that were being probed by police in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar, officials said on Monday.

They said the central agency has re-registered one case each from Gujarat and Bihar and three cases from Rajasthan as its own FIR, while it is also likely to take up another case from Maharashtra's Latur.

Barring the case from Bihar, the other four appear to be isolated incidents of impersonation and cheating by local officials, invigilators and candidates, the officials said. CBI has already registered its own FIR in connection with the case on a reference from the Union education ministry to conduct a comprehensive probe, they said.

After taking over these new cases, the CBI is now probing a total of six cases pertaining to alleged irregularities in NEET-UG, the officials said.

EOU has arrested 18 people in connection with the case, they said.

Cops find M'rashtra connection in exam irregularities

Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested a Zilla Parishad school teacher from Latur in Maharashtra and registered a case against four people after it emerged that a racket was being operated to help NEET students willing to pay money to crack the exam, police said on Monday. The four people against whom a case was registered include two teachers from Latur, a man from Nanded, and a resident of Delhi. ATS officials had received a tip-off that some suspects were running an illegal racket to help NEET students pass the exam in exchange for money," stated a release issued by the office of the Latur district superintendent of police. *—PTI*

A furious student protester confronts police personnel at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Rajasthan HC issues notice to NTA & Centre on NEET cancellation

Jaipur, 24 June

Rajasthan High Court issued notices to the National Testing Agency (NTA) and Centre on Monday, asking them to respond to petitions seeking the cancellation of the medical entrance exam NEET-UG amid allegations of irregularities. The court scheduled the hearing in the matter on 10 July, two days after the Supreme Court is set to hear similar petitions, including those seeking cancellation of the NEET-UG 2024 exam and a court-monitored investigation. Justice Ashok Kumar Jain of the High Court issued the notices to NTA and Central government. *—PTI*

> **I strongly urge upon you to consider and take immediate steps to restore the previous system of conducting exams and abolish NEET examination.**
>
> -Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal Chief Minister

> **It would have been in the fitness of things for the Hon PM to spare a few words for the young men & women for whom the #NEET scandal is the only issue that matters.**
>
> -Omar Abdullah, National Conference leader

> **This is nothing new. This is an old way of BJP. If you see history, BJP gets exam papers leaked to please its people**
>
> -Akhilesh Yadav, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief

> **Tamil Nadu has always been saying that we don't want NEET and wanted to be exempted from it. Today it is very clear that this exam is not really fair.**
>
> -Kanimozhi, DMK MP

UPSC moots AI-based CCTV surveillance system

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Amid the raging controversies involving alleged irregularities in NEET, NET exams, the country's premier recruitment body UPSC has decided to use facial recognition and Artificial Intelligence-based CCTV surveillance system to prevent cheating and impersonation in its various tests.

It has recently floated a tender to invite bids from experienced public sector undertakings to devise two tech solutions -- "Aadhaar based fingerprint authentication (else digital fingerprint capturing) & facial recognition of candidates and QR code scanning of e-admit cards" and "Live AI-based CCTV surveillance service"-- to be used during the examination process.

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), a Constitutional body, conducts 14 major exams. Accordingly, the Commission has desired to incorporate Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication (else digital fingerprint capturing) and facial recognition of candidates, scanning of QR Code of e-admit cards and monitoring through live AI-based CCTV video surveillance, it said.

UPSC said that it has decided to implement CCTV/video surveillance with recording and live broadcast systems to monitor various activities of the candidates and other persons deployed to conduct the Commission's examinations at the various centres/venues across the country under a secure environment *—PTI*

PLEA IN SC CLAIMS NTA OFFICIALS MANIPULATED OMR SHEETS IN EXAMS

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

A plea in the Supreme Court has alleged that the National Testing Agency (NTA) was involved in the manipulated of OMR sheets for NEET exams. A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and SVN Bhatti questioned the plea's qualification as a writ petition under Article 32 of the Constitution. It has sought investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) into the malpractices that marred the conduct of the NEET undergraduate exam. The matter will be heard on 8 July along with a slew of pleas, including one filed by NTA to transfer cases pending before various High Courts to the Supreme Court. *—Salar News with agencies*

PAANI SATYAGRAH

AAP workers participate in a candle light vigil in support of Atishi at Jangpura Road in New Delhi, on Monday. They are protesting against Delhi water crisis *PHOTO: PTI*

DELHI MINISTERS WRITE TO PM ON WATER CRISIS

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Delhi cabinet ministers have written a letter to Prime Narendra Modi and urged him to resolve the water crisis in the national capital on priority, Environment minister Gopal Rai said on Monday.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi ministers Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Kailash Gahlot and Imran Hussain said Atishi's indefinite fast has entered the fourth day and her health is deteriorating.

The ministers decided to write a letter to the prime minister on the water crisis during a meeting at the site of Atishi's hunger strike at Jangpura's Bhogal.

In the letter, the ministers said that despite the heatwave conditions, Delhi was not getting its "rightful share" of water from Haryana.

"The total water supply in Delhi is 1,005 MGD. Out of this, a huge chunk of 613 MGD comes from Haryana. For the last many weeks, there has been a decline in water coming from Haryana," the letter read.

Atishi's health worsens as docs advise hospitalisation

Delhi Water minister Atishi's health condition has deteriorated on the fourth day of her indefinite fast on Monday and doctors have advised her to be admitted to a hospital, the AAP said.

Atishi has, however, refused to be treated at a hospital, despite adverse health effects until Haryana released the "rightful share of Delhi's water".

A doctors' report said the "patient has been counselled for admission and oral intake" but she refused. *— PTI*

HC's action is unusual, says SC on Kejriwal's plea

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

In a set back to the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, apex court on Monday refused immediate relief to him.

The court responded to Kejriwal's arguments that the High Court order was unusual in staying bail without fully reading the order.

Justice Manoj Misra admits the High Court's actions were "unusual" adding, "In stay matters, orders are not reserved but passed on the spot. What has happened here is unusual." The Supreme Court on Monday fixed 26 June for hearing Kejriwal's plea against Delhi High Court order putting interim stay on his bail.

In his written submission filed on Monday, AAP leader defended the bail order and asserted that no prejudice would be caused to ED if he is released at this stage as he could be sent back to custody in case the high court subsequently decides to set aside the order.

He also stated that the assertions of ED are "palpably wrong, misleading and tantamount to subterfuge and misrepresentation".

AAP national convenor, who was arrested on 21 March by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), could have walked out of Tihar jail had the high court not granted the interim relief to the central anti-money laundering agency.

In a note filed on Monday in relation to the plea to stay the bail order, ED said the decision did not consider the material demonstrating the AAP leader's "neck deep involvement" in the offence of money laundering linked to the alleged excise scam.

—PTI with Agencies

LOK SABHA SESSION

BJP begins talks, Oppn weighs options for Speaker

Newly appointed Pro-Tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab, VP Jagdeep Dhankhar, President Droupadi Murmu and PM Narendra Modi, after oath-taking ceremony, at Rashtrapati Bhavan *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

BJP has begun consultations with its allies on the ruling NDA's candidate for the Lok Sabha Speaker's post while the Opposition INDIA bloc is considering its options and may force a contest to score political points, sources said on Monday, a day before the filing of nomination for the key position.

National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which enjoys a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, gave little indication about its choice as it weighs its options and looks to deny the Opposition any opportunity to mount a political attack.

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader and Union minister K Rammohan Naidu told reporters that the alliance's leaders, including his party's president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, will take a decision on the matter, adding that no final decision has been conveyed to them yet.

With the theme of continuity marking much of its choices since it returned to power for a third term, there is a view in a section of NDA leaders that Om Birla, who was the Speaker in the previous Lok Sabha, may be nominated again. However, there was no official word on such a prospect.

Several Opposition leaders said they will take a call on whether their alliance will name its candidate for the Speaker's post and force a contest depending on the NDA's stand. *—PTI*

Rashid did not take oath as MP

Abdul Rashid Sheikh could not take oath as a member of the 18th Lok Sabha on Monday despite his name being called as he is lodged in jail since 2019 after being charged by the NIA in a terror-funding case. Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, defeated former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah to win the parliamentary polls from the Baramulla seat as an Independent candidate. He is currently lodged in Tihar jail. A Delhi court on Saturday asked the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to respond by 1 July to an application filed by Rashid, seeking interim bail to take oath as an MP. Additional Sessions Judge Kiran Gupta fixed the matter for hearing on 1 July. *—PTI*

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY ON DISPLAY IN LS

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Lok Sabha witnessed a display of linguistic diversity on Monday, with the newly-elected MPs taking their oaths in English and Indian languages, including Sanskrit, Hindi, Dogri, Bengali, Assamese and Odia.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took his oath in Hindi amid slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" from the treasury benches. Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the MP from Odisha's Sambalpur, took oath in Odia.

Suresh Gopi, before taking his oath in Malayalam, he invoked the gods, saying "Krishna Guruvayurappa".

Shripad Yesso Naik, the MoS for Power and Renewable Energy, took his oath in Sanskrit. Naik won a sixth term from the North Goa constituency.

MoS for Education and Development of North Eastern Region Sukanta Majumdar took his oath in Bengali. Pune MP Muralidhar Mohol, the MoS for Aviation, took his oath in Marathi. Union Minister Jitender Singh, the MP from Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur, took his oath in Dogri. Union Minister of Port and Shipping Sarbananda Sonowal and Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu took their oaths in Assamese and Telugu, respectively.

Steel and Heavy Industries Minister HD Kumaraswamy and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi took their oaths in Kannada while Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy took his oath in Telugu. *—PTI*

49TH YEAR OF EMERGENCY

PM's remark looks back at civil rights halt

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday took a swipe at Congress over the imposition of Emergency in 1975, calling it a "black spot" on democracy when the Constitution was "discarded". It brought back memories of the 21-month period when the then prime minister Indira Gandhi ordered a crackdown on civil liberties.

Indira made the announcement of imposition of Emergency in a broadcast on All India Radio on late night on 25 June, 1975, shortly after the Supreme Court granted a conditional stay on Allahabad High Court verdict declaring her election to the Lok Sabha as null and void. The apex court asked Gandhi to stay away from parliamentary proceedings.

The loss of Congress in Gujarat elections to a five-party coalition and the Opposition rally at the Ramlila Ground in Delhi on 26 June, 1975 further put Gandhi in the dock and was considered a trigger for the imposition of Emergency.

Opposition leaders JP, LK Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Morarji Desai and scores of activists were put behind bars soon after the imposition of Emergency.

The 21-month period was also known for excesses such as forced mass sterlisations, censorship of the press, suspension of constitutional rights and centralisation of power.

Springing a surprise, Indira called for elections on 18 January, 1977 in the same manner in which it was imposed.

Before June 1975, a state of emergency was declared between October 1962 and January 1968 by then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru during the India-China war

Second emergency was declared on 3 December, 1971 due to the India-Pakistan war which led to creation of Bangladesh. *—PTI*

Modi took a swipe at Congress over the imposition of Emergency in 1975, calling it a 'black spot' on democracy *PHOTO: PTI/WIKI*

Union Min Athawale bats for caste census

INDORE, 24 JUNE

Union Minister Ramdas Athawale has said his Republican Party of India (A) supports conducting a caste census in the country and believes some way should be found for it.

Speaking to reporters in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city on Sunday, Athawale also said there should be no malpractice in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) and the Education Ministry was taking all possible steps to stop malpractices in the exam in future.

He said since Article 17 of the Constitution has a provision to abolish casteism, there has been a hindrance before governments on how to get a caste-based census conducted.

Athawale further said if future decisions include extending reservation benefits to every caste based on their population share, his party would not oppose it, acknowledging the existence of poverty across all castes.

Targeting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Athawale said, "I want to ask Gandhi that when the Congress was in power at the Centre, why the caste census was not conducted?" He claimed the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will win 170 to 180 seats out of 288 in the Maharashtra assembly elections, due in October this year. . *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Child dies after falling off toy train in Punjab mall

PUNJAB, 24 JUNE

A 10-year-old boy died after the compartment of a toy train in which he was taking a joy ride overturned at a mall here, police said on Monday. The incident took place on Saturday night at Elante Mall, where the boy and his family from Balachaur in Nawanshahr, Punjab, were enjoying an outing, they said. A purported CCTV footage of the incident has surfaced on social media. According to the police, Shahbaz was sitting in the last compartment, which overturned as the toy train made a turn, leaving the boy with severe head injuries. The victim's cousin, who was also sitting along with him, escaped unhurt, they added. Shahbaz was rushed to the government medical college and hospital in Sector 32, where he died, a senior official said. *—PTI*

Kerala: Tiger scare ends as forest dept traps tiger

WAYANAD, 24 JUNE

The farmers and local residents of a forest fringe village Kenichira in Kerala finally heaved a sigh of relief on Monday morning after the tiger fell in the trap set by the forest department officials. The tiger, identified as 'Tholpetty 7' has killed four cows in two days. It is learnt that the big cat had fallen into the trap set by the forest department on Sunday at around 11 pm. According to the officials, the tiger reached the cowsheds where it had attacked the cattle recently. It was caught in the trap kept there. The Forest Department has conducted preliminary health examinations on the wild animal and said it is suspected to have major health issues. The officials are considering shifting the big cat to any of the zoos in the state after giving medical aid. *—PTI*

2 kids electrocuted after touching air cooler in M'rashtra

AKOLA, 24 JUNE

Two children died of electrocution after touching an air cooler in Maharashtra's Akola district, police said on Monday. The incident took place on Sunday evening at Kalegaon in Telhara taluka, they said. The children, aged 4 and 5, had come to their maternal uncle's house for summer vacations. While playing, they touched an air cooler from which current was passing and both of them died on the spot, an official from Hiwarkhed police station said. The police have registered a case of accidental death, he said. *—PTI*

Mumbai Ponzi case: ED seizes ₹37 cr worth cash

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Bank and demat account deposits apart from cash worth about Rs 37 crore has been seized by the ED as part of a money laundering probe against a Mumbai-based financial consultant and his company who are alleged to have duped investors of Rs 600 crore through a Ponzi scheme. The federal agency said on Sunday that the action was undertaken after carrying out raids in the metropolitan city on June 21 against Amber Dalal and his company Ritz Consultancy Services. The Enforcement Directorate case of money laundering stems from a Mumbai Police FIR that charged the Chartered Accountant and his company with taking money from investors through a "suspected Ponzi scheme that promised high returns." Dalal "absconded" with this money after giving initial returns. It has been gathered that Dalal raised more than Rs 600 crore from 1,300 investors, the ED said in a statement. He was arrested by the EOW, Mumbai Police and under judicial custody, it said. *—PTI*

India says Canada allows acts glorifying terrorism

This comes on 39th anniversary of 1985 Kanishka bombing

OTTAWA, 24 JUNE

Terming the frequent acts glorifying militancy in Canada as "deplorable", India has emphasised that no government in the world should overlook the threat of terrorism emanating from its territories for political gains.

In a statement on the 39th anniversary of the 1985 Kanishka bombing, in which 329 persons, most of them Canadians of Indian descent, on board an Air India flight lost their lives, the Indian High Commission here said that terrorism knows "no borders, nationality, or race".

The Montreal-New Delhi Air India 'Kanishka' Flight 182 exploded 45 minutes before it was to have landed at London's Heathrow Airport on 23 June, 1985, killing all 329 people on board, including 86 children. The bombing was blamed on Sikh militants in retaliation to 'Operation Bluestar' to flush out militants from the Golden Temple in 1984.

Indian High Commission in Ottawa and the consulates of India in Toronto and Vancouver organised memorial services on Sunday and solemnly remembered the victims of the "dastardly act of terror" in 1985. Addressing the gathering, High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma said, "No government in the world should overlook the threat of terrorism emanating from its territories for political gains."

Indian High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma pays homage to the victims of Air India flight 182 Kanishka in Ottawa **PHOTO: PTI**

"Governments, security agencies, and international organisations must work in concert to dismantle terrorist networks, disrupt their financing, and counter their twisted ideologies," he added.

The memorial services were held at a time when relations between Canada and India are under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Nijjar's killing. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd" and "motivated". Earlier, in a statement, the Indian High Commission said it was "unfortunate" that

- Indian High Commission said it was "unfortunate" that such actions are allowed to be "routine" on many occasions here when it should be condemned by all peace-loving countries and people

such actions are allowed to be "routine" on many occasions here when it should be condemned by all peace-loving countries and people.

"It is unfortunate that such actions are allowed to be routine on many occasions in Canada," it added. India also insisted on Friday that the Canadian authorities must take action against those advocating violence and carrying out an anti-India campaign in Canada. "Consul General Siddhartha Nath laid a wreath at the Air India 182 memorial, Humber Park, Etobicoke, in solemn remembrance of the 329 victims of the terrorist bombing of AI 182 on this day, 39 years ago," the Consulate General of India in Toronto posted on X. *—PTI*

ROBBERY AT SHOP

Andhra man, who moved to US 8 months ago, killed

HOUSTON, 24 JUNE

A 32-year-old Indian man, who came to the US eight months ago, was shot to death during a robbery at a convenience store in the US state of Texas.

Dasari Gopikrishna sustained critical injuries during a robbery incident at a gas station convenience store in Pleasant Grove, Dallas, on 21 June.

After getting shot, he was rushed to the hospital but died 10 hours later.

From Yajali village in Andhra Pradesh's Bapatla, Gopikrisha had gone to Dalla in search of a job. However, the BTech graduate couldn't find a suitable position and started working part-time at the convenience store.

Gopikrishna got married three years ago and had a one-year-old son.

India's Consul General in Houston, DC Manjunath, who was in Dallas for a Yoga Day event on Sunday, confirmed to

Gopikrishna **PHOTO: GOFUNDME**

PTI that the incident was unrelated to a shooting in Arkansas, as previously reported by various sources.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday promised to help bring back Gopikrishna's body.

Expressing condolences to the victim's family, Naidu promised every possible help from the state government to the family based in the Bapatla district.

A video of the incident has gone viral in which a masked man wearing shorts and a cap is seen shooting multiple times at Gopikrishna. *—PTI*

Kallakurichi tragedy: 12 arrested for mixing methanol with hooch

NEW DELHI/ CHENNAI, 24 JUNE

At least tweleve people have been arrested in connection with the hooch tragedy, including K Govindharaj, his wife Vijaya and Govindharaj's brother Dhamodharan hailing from Karunapuram along with Chinnadurai who allegedly sold the loose liquor to the family.

BJP chief JP Nadda on Monday wrote to Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, questioning the "stoic silence" of his party on the recent hooch tragedy which left several people dead in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu hooch tragedy was entirely a "man-made disaster", Nadda said in his letter to Kharge, adding "perhaps if the deep nexus between the ruling DMK-INDI alliance dispensation and illicit liquor mafia did not exist today, 56 lives could have been saved".

Nadda said the ghastly images of burning funeral pyres from Karunapuram village in Kallakurichi in the aftermath of Tamil Nadu's "worst ever' spurious liquor consumption tragedy, that has left 56 dead until now and almost 159 persons hospitalised, has shaken the conscience of the entire nation".

Police personnel try to stop BJP workers protesting against the Tamil Nadu government over Kallakurichi hooch tragedy, in Chennai **PHOTO: PTI**

A BJP delegation led by its state chief K Annamalai on Monday met Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi, seeking a CBI probe into the tragedy that left 53 people dead.

In a post on 'X,' Annamalai claimed that 60 lives have been lost due to the tragedy and also urged Ravi to direct Chief Minister MK Stalin to drop his cabinet colleague S Muthusamy, who holds the Prohibition and Excise portfolio, holding him 'responsible' for the episode. He accused the ruling DMK of "not being so bothered" about the issue of "increased availability" of ganja and illicit arrack in the last three years and "this has led to a big suspicion." *—PTI*

1,500 families evicted from forest land in Assam

MORIGAON, 24 JUNE

Around 1,500 families who had reportedly settled illegally on forest and railway land have been asked leave the area in Assam's Morigaon district, an official said on Monday.

The families, comprising around 10,000 people, had settled on government land in Silbhanga village in Jagiroad, District Commissioner Devashish Sarma told reporters here. "A notice was served to the people of the area on 12 June asking them to vacate the land," he added. He also informed that some families whose children appearing for different examinations. have asked for more time, and "We have decided to make arrangements for their stay till the exams are over."

"The administration is keen to ensure the clearance of the land without the use of any force or demolition of structures," Sarma said. *—PTI*

Kerala Class 11 seat row: Protest turns violent

T'PURAM, 24 JUNE

Kerala Students' Union (KSU) and the Muslim Students' Federation (MSF) members on Monday continued their protest across the state against the alleged shortage of plus-one (Class 11) seats in schools in the northern Malabar region of Kerala. The agitation turned violent in some places.

KSU and MSF are the student wings of Congress and Indian Union Muslim League.

The student outfits held the protest marches as Opposition parties in Kerala Assembly came down heavily on the government over the issue. The Opposition accused the government of failing to resolve the matter.

KSU and MSF members marched towards the Legislative Assembly complex but were stopped by the police. The police used water cannons to disperse the KSU members.

At Kollam, the student organisations headed towards the District Collectorate, where they pelted stones at police and attempted to jump the barricade. They also destroyed banners, flex boards, and other items along the road near the Collectorate, forcing the police to fire many rounds of smoke grenades.

For the past two days, there have been widespread protests across the state black flags were waved at Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. *—PTI*

Jaishankar holds 'deep & productive' talks with UAE

DUBAI, 24 JUNE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has reviewed with his United Arab Emirates counterpart Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan the multi-faceted India-UAE comprehensive strategic partnership and discussed new areas with "untapped potential" to enhance collaboration, an official statement said on Monday.

Jaishankar, who was in the UAE on Sunday, also exchanged views with Al Nahyan on regional and global issues. He visited the iconic BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi and participated in the 10th International Yoga Day celebrations before meeting Al Nahyan.

The two foreign ministers "reviewed the multi-faceted India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in New Delhi said on Monday. They expressed "happiness at the substantive progress in diverse areas of bilateral cooperation, including commercial and economic collaboration, fintech, education, culture, and people-to-people connect," it said in a statement.

The ministry said the two ministers "discussed new areas with untapped potential for further enhancing collaboration" and also exchanged views on regional and global issues. *—PTI*

Assam flood situation remains grim

GUWAHATI, 24 JUNE

The flood situation in Assam improved marginally with the water level of the major rivers showing a receding trend on Monday though over two lakh people are still affected by the deluge, officials said. A population of 2.07 lakh people currently affected by flood in nine districts of the state, they said. The districts currently affected by flood are Bajali, Barpeta, Biswanath, Cachar, Darrang, Goalpara, Kamrup, Karimganj and Nalbari. The worst affected district is Karimganj with over one lakh people under flood waters, followed by Cachar with 50,000 and Darrang with 30,000 people. *—PTI*

Indus Water Treaty talks: Indo-Pak teams reach J&K

JAMMU, 24 JUNE

A large delegation of Indo-Pakistan teams on Monday flew to Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district with neutral experts and started inspection of two power projects under the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), officials said.

The 40-member delegation reached Jammu on Sunday evening and flew to Kishtwar this morning for inspection of various under-construction power projects in the Chenab valley region, the officials said.

This is the first visit by a Pakistani delegation to Jammu and Kashmir in more than five years under the dispute settlement mechanism of the 1960 Treaty.

India and Pakistan signed the IWT after nine years of negotiations, with the World Bank being a signatory of the pact which sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two sides on the use of waters of a number of cross-border Rivers.

A three-member Pakistan delegation inspected the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydroelectric power projects under the provisions of the IWT for the last time in January 2019, before the ties between the two countries froze following the revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Immediately after landing at an army camp, the visiting delegation visited the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) headquarters, the officials said, adding they left for the 85 MW Ratle hydroelectric power project site at Drabshalla for dam inspection. *—PTI*

9 arrested for taking cattle to abattoir in MP

BHOPAL, 24 JUNE

Madhya Pradesh police have rescued more than 50 cattle being transported in three trucks from Punjab to Maharashtra for slaughtering and arrested nine people, an official said on Monday.

The trucks were intercepted on Saturday at Kakarda post under Maheshwar police station limits on the Agra-Mumbai highway in Khargone, a release said.

When the truck covers were removed, the animals were found crammed in the vehicles and their necks tied with ropes. The drivers allegedly did not have a valid permit for transporting the cattle.

During questioning, it was found the animals were loaded in the trucks at Majitha in Amritsar by two people --

- When the truck covers were removed, the animals were found crammed in the vehicles and their necks tied with ropes. The drivers did not have a valid permit for transporting the cattle

Sukhdev Singh alias Kaka and John -- and were being transported to Solapur for slaughtering to earn money, the release said. The police registered a case against 11 people. Nine of the accused were arrested while the search was on for two others, the police said.The cattle, valued at Rs 15 lakh, were shifted to a 'gaushala' at Nimrani in Khargone, they said, adding that the trucks were impounded. *—PTI*

The operation recovered guns, rifles, and CMG **PHOTO: X/@OFFICIAL_DGAR**

Cache of arms, ammunition recovered in Manipur

IMPHAL, 24 JUNE

A huge cache of arms and ammunition and warlike stores were recovered in a joint operation conducted by the Assam Rifles and Manipur police in Thoubal district of Manipur, an official statement from Assam Rifles said on Sunday. The operation resulted in the recovery of one 12 bore single barrel gun, one 12 bore Bolt action rifle, one 9 mm CMG, ammunition, and grenades. "Acting on specific intelligence of presence of arms and ammunition in general area Waithou Ridge area of Thoubal district in Manipur. "The recovered items have been handed over to Manipur Police." Earlier, Manipur Police said that security forces arrested three insurgents. *—ANI*

'FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT'

HC: Streets cleared for PM, why not for all?

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Bombay High Court on Monday said when streets and footpaths are cleared for the prime minister and other VVIPs for one day, why can't it be done daily for everyone else too?

Having a clear footpath and a safe place to walk was every person's fundamental right and the state authorities were obligated to provide the same, division bench of Justices MS Sonak and Kamal Khata.

The state cannot perpetually just wonder what can be done to work out the problem of unauthorised hawkers encroaching upon footpaths in the city and has to now do something drastically, the bench said.

On Monday, the bench said while it knows the problem is large, the state and other

The bench said state has to now do something drastically **PHOTO: PTI**

authorities, including the civic body, cannot just leave it at that and called for some drastic action. "A footpath and a safe place to walk is a fundamental right. We tell our children to walk on footpaths but if there is no footpath left to walk on, what do we tell our children?" the court asked.

For years together, the authorities have been saying they are working on the issue, it said. Senior counsel SU Kamdar, appearing for Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), said periodic action is taken against vendors and hawkers but they keep coming back.

He said BMC was considering the option of the underground market.

The court said the corporation was trying to bury the problem underground.

The bench noted the fine imposed by civic bodies on vendors/hawkers was irrelevant as they have higher sales per day.

"Your fine is a pittance to them. They will pay and leave," it said.

The court suggested BMC to develop a database identifying hawkers so that they do not breach orders and come back.

"Let there be a combing operation. Start with one street...the biggest trouble is identification. They keep coming back because they are not identifiable," it said. *—PTI*

BRIDGE UNDER 48 HOURS

Indian Army engineers constructed a 150-feet suspension bridge in North Sikkim under 48 hours to connect flood-hit villages. Army's Trishakti Corps personnel constructed the bridge over a flowing river to help transport relief materials to locals. The region has been affected with floods and landslides after heavy rains.

PHOTO: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Exam scandal agonises students, future at risk

Last week, on a blistering day in Delhi, Kavya Mukhija travelled for hours to take a crucial government-run exam for entry-level teaching positions at Indian universities.

The 25-year-old freelance researcher and disability activist uses a wheelchair as she has a rare congenital condition of stiff joints and found the exam centre difficult to access. The road outside was dug up, the steep ramps were unusable for wheelchairs – and the centre itself did not have a wheelchair.

If all this was not enough, a ruder shock awaited her.

A day after taking the four-hour test, with her caregiver mother waiting outside in the sweltering heat, authorities cancelled the UGC-NET - as the exam is called - which had been taken by over 900,000 candidates across more than 300 cities.

The education ministry initially put out a cryptic statement saying the "integrity of the exam may have been compromised". A day later, Minister Dharmendra Pradhan admitted the question paper had been leaked on social media platform Telegram and on the "dark net".

Nearly 1,000km away in Patna, Archit Kumar faces a similar challenge.

In May, the 19-year-old aspiring doctor sat for a 200-minute nationwide government-run undergraduate exam where 2.4 million aspirants competed for over 110,000 medical college seats.

A scandal erupted shortly after the exam – four people were arrested in Bihar state for allegedly leaking the question papers of what is called the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG exam.

There were widespread allegations of cheating, with many candidates scoring suspiciously high marks. Aspirants openly reported being cold-called by touts demanding up to 3 million rupees for question papers just hours before the exam. Some even recorded the calls as evidence.

छात्रों के ज़िंदगी से खेलना बंद करो !
SFI
KYS
What is Meant By The Lack of Integrity. The Authorities Must Clarify!
DOES IT MEAN COMPROMISED INTEGRITY OF THE NTA?
KYS
RISE IN RAGE AGAINST UGC-NET SCAM AN CORRUPT NTA!
KYS
SHAME ON NTA AUTHORITIES FOR YET ANOTHER PAPER LEAK!
DISBAND NTA!
Dharmendra Pradhan MUST RESIGN !
SFI
BAN COACHING CENTRES!!

Students protest over NEET-UG and UGC-NET examinations in New Delhi after alleged irregularities ***PHOTO: PTI***

Many students and parents are demanding a re-test, with numerous petitions filed in courts for the purpose – and Supreme Court is examining this. Pradhan ordered an investigation and admitted "some errors limited to specific regions" had happened. He said the fate of millions of aspirants would not be held hostage for "some isolated incidents".

For the past two years, he had given up his social life – avoiding even meeting friends – and studied up to 12 hours daily for one of the world's most competitive exams. Scoring 625 out of the final 720 marks, he secured an all-India rank of 53,000.

India's examination system is in chaos. To be sure, cheating and paper leaks have long plagued exams. But now, major exams managed by the state-run National Testing Agency (NTA), including those taken by Kavya and Archit, appear compromised. In the past month, alleged paper leaks and manipulated marks in these exams have put the futures of 3.5 million aspirants at risk. Last week, three other public exams conducted by the government were either cancelled or postponed, affecting another 1.3 million candidates.

Things are worse in state exams. Question papers for various local government recruitment exams are frequently leaked amid fierce competition for jobs in an economy where most positions are largely informal, insecure, and low-paying.

Recruitment exams for policemen, foresters, engineers, veterinarians and income-tax inspectors have been affected by leaks in the past. Papers have been leaked on WhatsApp, and stolen from storerooms. Suspects have hacked into servers of private companies handling exams. In 2022, Delhi police busted a major online cheating ring, helping candidates to cheat in top exams. They had hired Russian hackers to develop undetectable software, allowing them to remotely hack computers in exam centres.

In 2015, the most audacious exam cheating scandal rocked Vyapam, a government office in Madhya Pradesh overseeing more than 50 exams for government jobs and local medical colleges.

The fact that 2.4 million students competed for just 110,000 medical college seats this year underlines the immense pressure and fierce competition. Of these some 55,000-60,000 seats are in government-run colleges, with the remainder in private institutions. Half of these seats are reserved for underprivileged students.

Students prefer government colleges due to their affordability – a five-year MBBS course in a government college costs between 500,000 and 1m rupees, whereas private colleges can charge up to 10 times more.

Many believe India's jobs crisis is largely to blame for this. "This is largely a skills crisis," economist Karthik Muralidharan notes in his new book, Accelerating India's Development. "Millions of educated youth are unemployed, yet employers struggle to find adequately skilled manpower."

The education system's emphasis on passing exams through cramming leaves many students lacking understanding of subjects and practical skills valued by employers. For the moment, the government has promised a rigorous probe into the latest scandals and Pradhan, the minister, has taken "moral responsibility" for the loss of faith among students.

Much more needs to be done. It's unclear if a new anti-cheating law for government jobs and college entrance exams has been a deterrent. Mr Peri questions why authorities don't conduct basic "hygiene" checks during the compilation of exam results. He suggests that authorities should investigate any irregularities if, say, six top scorers are from one exam centre or students who performed poorly in high school top an undergraduate exam. *—BBC News*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

74% Indians want wealth tax on super-rich

As G20 finance ministers prepare to consider a wealth tax on the super-rich next month, a survey has revealed that 68 per cent of people in these countries, including 74 per cent in India, support the idea to address global hunger, inequality and climate crisis.

The survey by the Earth4All initiative and Global Commons Alliance covered 22,000 citizens in the world's largest economies.

The proposal for a levy on the super-rich has been under discussion since at least 2013 with international support on the issue growing over the years.

Brazil, the current president of the G20, aims to build consensus on the taxation of wealth and is likely to push for a joint declaration at a meeting of G20 finance ministers in July.

Gabriel Zucman, a French economist and a key influencer behind Brazil's G20 proposal for progressive international taxation to promote tax justice, will release a report on Tuesday, outlining how "a global minimum tax on the ultra-rich" could work and how much it could raise.

According to Zucman, the super-rich pay significantly less tax than the ordinary people. The proposal aims to establish a new international standard: billionaires in every country would be required to pay at least 2 per cent of their wealth in taxes annually.

Owen Gaffney, co-lead of Earth4All, said, "Indians want a giant leap on climate and nature -- 68 per cent demand dramatic reforms across all economic sectors within the next decade.

The survey covered 22,000 citizens in the world's largest economies ***PHOTO: AL JAZEERA***

- Sixty-eight per cent of Indians believe the world needs to take dramatic action in the next decade across all sectors of the economy

This is a strong mandate for planetary stewardship that cannot be ignored."

Seventy-four per cent of Indians support taxing wealth. Tax on high incomes and corporations to fund climate initiatives alongside a 'polluter pays' approach with income redistribution are also strongly supported, he said.

Seventy-one per cent of Indians endorse universal basic income, 74 per cent support policies that encourage healthy diets to cut emissions, and 76 per cent seek a better work-life balance.

Sixty-eight per cent of Indians believe the world needs to take dramatic action in the next decade across all sectors of the economy -- electricity generation, transport, buildings, industry, and food.

Eighty-one per cent of the Indians surveyed support a shift to "wellbeing economies" that have a stronger focus on health and the environment than a narrow focus on economic growth. *—PTI*

71 per cent of Indians endorse universal basic income, 74 per cent support policies that encourage healthy diets to cut emissions, and 76 per cent seek a better work-life balance ***PHOTO: ANI***

Eerie 'digital afterlife' is here, here's how to navigate risks

Imagine a future where your phone pings with a message that your dead father's "digital immortal" bot is ready. This promise of chatting with a virtual version of your loved one – perhaps through a virtual reality (VR) headset – is like stepping into a sci-fi movie, both thrilling and a bit eerie.

As you interact with this digital dad, you find yourself on an emotional rollercoaster. You uncover secrets and stories you never knew, changing how you remember the real person.

This is not a distant, hypothetical scenario. The digital afterlife industry is rapidly evolving. Several companies promise to create virtual reconstructions of deceased individuals based on their digital footprints.

From artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots and virtual avatars to holograms, this technology offers a strange blend of comfort and disruption. It may pull us into deeply personal experiences that blur the lines between past and present, memory and reality.

As the digital afterlife industry grows, it raises significant ethical and emotional challenges. These include concerns about consent, privacy and the psychological impact on the living.

What is the digital afterlife industry?

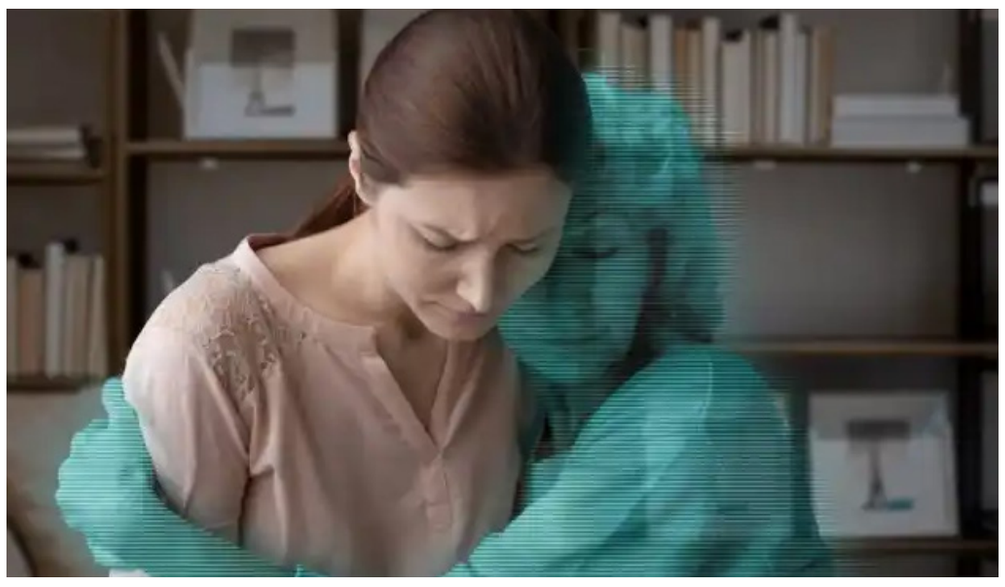
VR and AI technologies are making virtual reconstructions of our loved ones possible. Companies in this niche industry use data from social media posts, emails, text messages and voice recordings to create digital personas that can interact with the living.

Although still niche, the number of players in the digital afterlife industry is growing.

HereAfter allows users to record stories and messages during their lifetime, which can then be accessed by loved ones posthumously. MyWishes offers the ability to send pre-scheduled messages after death, maintaining a presence in the lives of the living.

Hanson Robotics has created robotic busts that interact with people using the memories and personality traits of the deceased. Project December grants users access to so-called "deep AI" to engage in text-based conversations with those who have passed away.

Generative AI also plays a crucial role in the digital afterlife industry. These technologies enable the creation of highly realistic and interactive digital personas. But the high level of realism may blur the line between reality and simulation. This may enhance the user experience, but may also cause emotional and psychological distress.



VR & AI technologies are making virtual reconstructions of our loved ones after their deaths. This may enhance the user experience, but may also cause emotional & psychological distress ***PHOTO: THE CONVERSATION***

For some of us, these digital immortals could be therapeutic tools. They may help us to preserve positive memories and feel close to loved ones even after they have passed away.

But for others, the emotional impact may be profoundly negative, exacerbating grief rather than alleviating it. AI recreations of loved ones have the potential to cause psychological harm if the bereaved ends up having unwanted interactions with them. It's essentially being subjected to a "digital haunting".

There's also the risk of misuse and data manipulation. Companies could exploit digital immortals for commercial gain, using them to advertise products or services. Digital personas could be altered to convey messages or behaviours the deceased would never have endorsed.

We need regulation

To address concerns around this quickly emerging industry, we need to update our legal frameworks. We need to address issues such as digital estate planning, who inherits the digital personas of the deceased, and digital memory ownership.

The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) recognises post-mortem privacy rights, but faces challenges in enforcement.

Social media platforms control deceased users' data access, often against heirs' wishes, with clauses like "no right of survivorship" complicating matters.

Limited platform practices hinder the GDPR's effectiveness. Comprehensive protection demands revaluating contractual rules, aligning with human rights.

The digital afterlife industry offers comfort and memory preservation, but raises ethical and emotional concerns. Implementing thoughtful regulations and ethical guidelines can honour both the living and the dead, to ensure digital immortality enhances our humanity.

What can we do?

Researchers have recommended several ethical guidelines and regulations. Some recommendations include:

Obtaining informed and documented consent before creating digital personas from People before they die

•Age restrictions to protect vulnerable groups

•Clear disclaimers to ensure transparency

•And strong data privacy and security measures.

Drawing from ethical frameworks in archaeology, a 2018 study has suggested treating digital remains as integral to personhood, proposing regulations to ensure dignity, especially in re-creation services.

Dialogue between policymakers, industry and academics is crucial for developing ethical and regulatory solutions.

Through careful, responsible development, we can create a future where digital afterlife technologies meaningfully and respectfully honour our loved ones.

As we navigate this brave new world, it is crucial to balance the benefits of staying connected with our loved ones against the potential risks and ethical dilemmas.

By doing so, we can make sure the digital afterlife industry develops in a way that respects the memory of the deceased and supports the emotional wellbeing of the living. *—The Conversation*

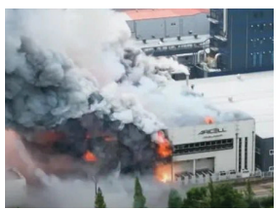


PHOTO: X @PHOENIXCNE_NEWS

22 dead in lithium battery factory fire in South Korea

SEOUL, 24 JUNE

A fire at a lithium battery manufacturing factory near Seoul in South Korea on Monday left at least 22 people dead, seven injured and six missing, officials said. Rescue workers at the factory in Hwaseong city, just south of Seoul, retrieved the bodies after combing through the site, local fire official Kim Jin-young told a televised briefing. Kim earlier said most of the missing people were foreign nationals including Chinese. He said the mobile phone signals of the missing people were tracked to the second floor of the factory. Kim said a witness told that the fire began after batteries exploded as workers were examining and packaging them, but the exact cause would be investigated. Kim said 102 people were working at the factory before the fire occured.*—AP*

Iran, Bahrain to talk on resuming diplomatic ties

TEHRAN, 24 JUNE

Iran and Bahrain have agreed to talk about how they might resume bilateral relations after nearly eight years, Iranian media reported on Monday. The report by state-run IRNA news agency said Iran's acting foreign minister Ali Bagheri Kani and his Bahraini counterpart Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani spoke on the sidelines of the ongoing Asian Cooperation Dialogue in Tehran. The report said both sides agreed on creating the framework to start talks on the requirements for resuming diplomatic relations. Bahrain cut its diplomatic relations with Iran after Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties with Tehran following Riyadh's execution of an opposition Shiite cleric and attacks on Saudi diplomatic posts in Iran in 2016. They resumed their relations in 2023. *—AP*

Far-right German leader on trial over Nazi slogan use

BERLIN, 24 JUNE

A prominent German far-right politician who plans to run for the governor's job in an eastern state later this year went on trial for the second time on Monday on charges of knowingly using a Nazi slogan at a political event. The politician, Bjorn Hocke was fined 13,000 euros last month for using symbols of an unconstitutional organisation, a verdict that his lawyers are appealing against. The trial that opened Monday at the state court in Halle involves a second alleged use of the same slogan. The first case centred on a speech in Merseburg in May 2021 in which Höcke, a high-profile figure in the Alternative for Germany party, used the phrase "Everything for Germany!" *—AP*

Pakistan's PTI leader gets bail in 9 May riot cases

ISLAMABAD, 24 JUNE

An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Pakistan granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General, Omar Ayub Khan and other party leaders in 9 May cases as police failed to present the record of four cases and witnesses in court, reported ARY News. According to the details, the court heard the case against PTI leaders, including Omar Ayub, Shibli Faraz, Azam Swati, Zartaj Gul, Zain Qureshi and former party leader Fawad Chaudhry. The court granted bail to all the defendants due to a lack of evidence against them, as reported by ARY News. The 9 May events refer to violent protests that erupted after PTI founder Imran Khan was arrested from the premises of Islamabad High Court in a corruption case in 2023. Khan has been named as the main accused, ARY News reported. *—ANI*

Gunmen on rampage fire at religious places

Attackers set churches and synagogues on fire, 19 dead include civilians, police officers

MOSCOW, 24 JUNE

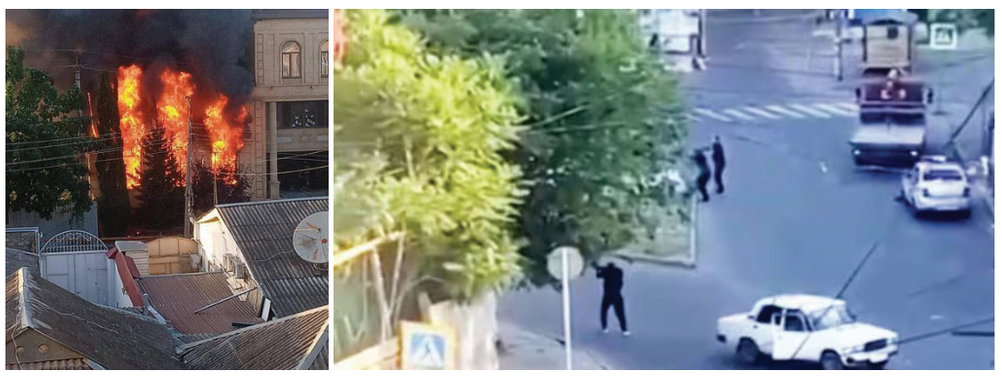
At least 19 police officers and several civilians were dead following an attack on police posts, churches and a synagogue in Russia's North Caucasus republic of Dagestan on Sunday.

The apparently coordinated attacks targeted the cities of Derbent and Makhachkala on the Orthodox festival of Pentecost.

The assailants have not been officially identified, but Dagestan has in the past been the scene of Islamist attacks.

The republic's head, Sergei Melikov, said it was understood who was behind the organisation of the attacks, without giving details.

Two churches and a synagogue were targeted in Sunday's attacks, as well as a police post in Makhachkala, Dagestan's largest city. An Orthodox Church priest was among those killed.



Smoke rising from a synagogue; Gunmen opened fire at synagogues and churches in Derbent, Russia on Sunday
PHOTOS: X@ SULAIMAN AHMED/SCREENGRAB

Melikov said several civilians had lost their life, including a priest, Father Nikolai Kotelnikov, who he said had served in Derbent for more than 40 years.

The gunmen have not yet been officially identified, but in a video on Telegram, Melikov said their attack had been prepared abroad and that Dagestan was now directly involved in Russia's war in Ukraine.

A leading Russian nationalist in occupied Ukraine, Dmitry Rogozin, warned that if every attack was blamed on

- The gunmen have not yet been officially identified, but in a video on Telegram, Melikov said their attack had been prepared abroad and that Dagestan was now directly involved in Russia's war in Ukraine

"the machinations of Ukraine and NATO, this pink mist will lead us to big problems".

Footage posted on social media shows people wearing dark clothes shooting at police cars, before a convoy of emergency service vehicles arrive at the scene.

In Derbent - home to an ancient Jewish community - gunmen attacked a synagogue and a church, which were then set on fire.

A police vehicle was also reportedly attacked in the village of Sergokal. Police detained head of the Sergokalinsky district Magomed Omarov, near Makhachkala, following reports that two of his sons were among those who carried out Sunday's attacks.

Russian news agencies reported on Monday morning that the counter-terrorism operation launched after the attacks had now come to an end.

Dagestan, one of the poorest parts of Russia, is a predominantly Muslim republic.

Following an attack on the Crocus City Hall venue near Moscow in March, authorities blamed Ukraine and the West, even though the Islamic State group claimed it.

—BBC NEWS

Netanyahu says 'fighting' in Gaza near end, but war not over

JERUSALEM, 24 JUNE

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the "intense phase" of fighting in Rafah in southern Gaza is nearly over, but that this does not mean that the war is coming to an end.

He said the war would continue until Hamas was completely driven from power.

He added that the Israeli military would soon be able to redeploy troops to the border with Lebanon, where exchanges of fire with Hezbollah have been escalating.

Netanyahu also again rejected the idea that the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority should run Gaza in place of Hamas. "In the end, you will have to do two things: you will need the ongoing military demilitarisation by the Israel Defense Forces and you will need to establish a civil administration, I hope that with the support and management of certain countries in the region, I think this is the right way to move forward," he said in an Israeli television interview. Rafah residents said there had been more clashes in the city, while Israeli air strikes on Gaza City are reported to have killed the Hamas-run health ministry's director of emergency services. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant is starting a visit to Washington, to discuss the war in Gaza and the escalating tensions with Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran. Israeli military launched a campaign to destroy Hamas in response to the Palestinian armed group's unprecedented attack on southern Israel on 7 October, during which about 1,200 people - mostly civilians - were killed and 251 others were taken hostage.More than 37,551 people have been killed in Gaza since then, according to the territory's Hamas-run Health Ministry. *—PTI*

Benjamin Netanyahu
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

- Rafah residents said there had been more clashes in the city, while Israeli air strikes on Gaza City are reported to have killed the Hamas-run health ministry's director of emergency services

Russia is suspected of running a ghost fleet to evade sanctions *PHOTO: X@HDNER*

EU hits Russia with new sanction on LNG ghost fleet

BRUSSELS, 24 JUNE

The European Union (EU) on Monday slapped new sanctions on Russia over its war on Ukraine, targeting Moscow's shadow fleet of tankers moving liquefied natural gas through Europe as well as several companies.

In a statement issued at a meeting of EU Foreign Ministers, the bloc said that it will "forbid reloading services of Russian LNG in EU territory for the purpose of transshipment operations to third countries."

The EU estimates that about 4-to-6 billion cubic metres of Russian LNG was shipped to third countries via EU ports last year.

Russia is suspected of running a "ghost fleet" to evade sanctions and keep up the flow of energy earnings so that it can finance the war.

The measures will target ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore transfers as well as reloading operations. It also involves a crackdown on the re-export of LNG to third countries via the EU, plus a ban on new investments to help Russia complete LNG projects it is working on.

A total of 61 new "entities" – often companies, banks, agencies and other organisations – were added to the EU's list, including a number of them in China, Turkiye and the United Arab Emirates. Many are accused of circumventing the bloc's sanctions or providing sensitive equipment to Russia.

Around 50 more officials are also being targeted with asset freezes, as well as travel bans. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, as well as scores of lawmakers and several oligarchs are among more than 1,700 people already listed by the EU. More than 400 entities previously hit include companies working in the military, aviation and machine sectors, the Wagner mercenary group, political parties and banks. Around USD 225 billion worth of Russian Central Bank assets are blocked in the EU. *—AP*

UKRAINE MOVING FAST ON EU MEMBERSHIP

KYIV, 24 JUNE

Ukraine's top official for Europe says the war-torn country is on an "irreversible" course of Western integration after the European Union agreed to formally start entry negotiations this week.

The decision to launch accession talks this week is a "big day" for her country, the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration Olga Stefanishyna said. "This is the utmost will of the Ukrainian people. And this is the irreversibility. And you've seen Ukrainians stand up for their choice," Stefanishyna said, speaking in Kyiv Sunday. EU leaders agreed Friday to start the entry talks with Ukraine and Moldova – overcoming vocal opposition led by Hungary which takes over the EU's rotating presidency on 1 July.

Stefanishyna will head the opening of the accession talks in Luxembourg Tuesday, joined by several top government officials. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to give a speech at the launch ceremony, but Stefanishyna did not elaborate whether he would do so in person or online.

Zelenskyy described Friday's decision as a "historic step," adding in an online post: "Generations of our people are realising their European dream. Ukraine is returning to Europe. *—AP*

China, EU open to talks on plans to hike tariffs on Chinese EVs

BANGKOK, 24 JUNE

China and the European Union (EU) are open to holding talks on the EU's recent decision to sharply raise tariffs on imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles, officials from both sides say.

China's Commerce Ministry and Germany's economy minister said over the weekend that each side was willing to hold talks on the issue. Meanwhile, Chinese state media said Monday that Beijing is pushing for the EU to give up plans to sharply raise tariffs on imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles by 4 July.

Escalating a trade dispute over Beijing's subsidies that Brussels worries are hurting European automakers, the EU plans to impose provisional tariffs of 17.4 per cent to 38.1per cent on EVs from China for four months starting on July 4. That's on top of the 10 per cent duties for all imported EVs.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, said preliminary results from an investigation into Chinese EV subsidies showed the country's battery electric vehicle "value chain" benefits from "unfair subsidization" that hurts EU rivals.

Commerce Minister Wang Wentao held a video conference with European Commission Executive Vice President and Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis, the Chinese Commerce Ministry said in a notice Saturday on its website. *—AP*

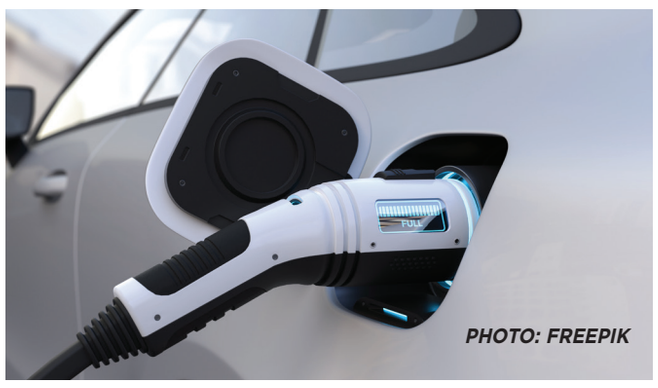


PHOTO: FREEPIK

UNDER CONSTANT FEAR

Religious minorities under attack: Pak minister

ISLAMABAD, 24 JUNE

During a session of Pakistan's national Assembly, Khawaja Asif, the country's defence minister, acknowledged that minorities are facing targeted violence in the name of religion.

Expressing concern over the daily killings of minorities, Khawaja stated, "Every day, minorities are being killed. They are not safe under the guise of Islam. I want to address the issue of minority safety, but the Opposition is blocking my efforts. Pakistan is facing global embarrassment." He emphasised that no religious minorities, including smaller sects within Islam, are safe in Pakistan, despite constitutional protections. Asif called for a resolution to safeguard minorities, highlighting that many victims of violence had no connection to blasphemy allegations but were targeted due to personal vendettas. According to Human Rights Watch reports, Hindus, Sikhs, and other minorities in Pakistan continue to face challenges such as forced conversions, kidnappings, and killings.

The situation remains precarious, with incidents reported across various regions. Moreover, the Ahmadiyya community faces severe persecution, including legal restrictions on their religious practices, hate speech, and violent attacks. *—ANI*

Prosecutors seek to bar Trump from comments about FBI

FORT PIERCE, 24 JUNE

The federal judge presiding over the classified documents prosecution of former US president Donald Trump is hearing arguments Monday on whether to bar Trump from public comments that prosecutors say could endanger the lives of FBI agents working on the case.

Special counsel Jack Smith's team says the restrictions are necessary in light of Trump's false comments that the FBI agents who searched his Mar-a-Lago estate in August 2022 for classified documents were out to kill him and his family.

Trump's lawyers say any gag order would improperly silence Trump in the heat of a presidential campaign in which he is the presumptive Republican nominee.

—AP

World's 1st anti-epilepsy device fitted in UK boy's skull

LONDON, 24 JUNE

A boy with severe epilepsy has become the first patient in the world to trial a new device fitted in their skull to control seizures.

The neurostimulator, which sends electrical signals deep into his brain, has reduced Oran Knowlson's daytime seizures by 80 per cent.

The surgery was carried out in October as part of a trial at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London when Oran - who is now 13. Oran, has Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, a treatment-resistant form of epilepsy which he developed at the age of three. The device aims to block or disrupt the abnormal signals.Two electrodes were inserted deep into Oran's brain until they reached the thalamus, a key relay station for neuronal information.

The ends of the leads were connected to the neurostimulator, a 3.5cm square and 0.6cm thick device which was placed in a gap in Oran's skull where the bone had been removed. The neurostimulator was then screwed into the surrounding skull, to anchor it in place. Oran was given a month to recover from the operation.

In future, the team plan to make the neurostimulator respond in real time to changes in his brain activity, in an attempt to block seizures as they are about to happen. *—BBC News*

CYBERWAR

'Chinese hackers step up attacks on Taiwan'

HONG KONG, 24 JUNE

A suspected Chinese state-sponsored hacking group has stepped up its targeting of Taiwanese organisations, particularly those in sectors such as government, education, technology and diplomacy, according to cybersecurity intelligence company Recorded Future.

In recent years, relations between China and Taiwan, a self-governed island across the Taiwan Strait that Beijing claims as its territory, have deteriorated.

The cyberattacks by the group known as RedJulliett were observed between November 2023 and April 2024, during the lead up to Taiwan's presidential elections in January and the subsequent change in administration.

RedJuliett has targeted Taiwanese organisations in the past, but this is the first time that activity was seen at such a scale, a Recorded Future analyst said, speaking on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns.

The report said RedJuliett attacked 24 organisations, including government agencies in places like Laos, Kenya and Rwanda, as well as Taiwan.

It also hacked into websites of religious organisations in Hong Kong and South Korea, a US university and a Djiboutian university. The report did not identify the organisations.

Recorded Future said RedJuliett accessed the servers of those places via a vulnerability in their SoftEther enterprise virtual private network (VPN) software, an open-source VPN that allows remote connections to an organization's networks. *—AP*

The cyberattacks by RedJuliett attacked 24 organisations, including government agencies
PHOTO: FREEPIK

Rupee rises 11 paise against US dollar

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

The rupee appreciated 11 paise to settle at 83.46 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, supported by a positive trend in domestic equity markets and stable global crude oil prices. Forex traders said a weak US dollar against major rivals overseas on Monday also helped the rupee. However, weak Asian markets and renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East capped sharp gains. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.52 and hit the intraday high of 83.44 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 83.46 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 11 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee hit the lowest level of 83.63 but finally settled at 83.57 against the dollar. *—PTI*

Gold declines ₹120; silver slumps ₹400

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Gold prices declined Rs 120 to Rs 72,480 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid a fall in precious metal rates globally, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the yellow metal had settled at Rs 72,600 per 10 grams. Also, silver prices slumped Rs 400 to Rs 91,900 per kg. In the previous session, it had closed at Rs 92,300 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,480 per 10 grams, down by Rs 120 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, both gold and silver were trading lower at USD 2,318 per ounce and USD 29.47 per ounce, respectively.*—PTI*

WB workers of Britannia accept VRS

KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

FMCG major Britannia Industries Limited said that all the permanent workers at its factory at Taratala in Kolkata have accepted the voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) offered to them. An official of the company said that due to this acceptance of VRS by all the permanent workers of the plant, there will be no material impact on the business operations of the company. The company had informed the bourses recently about all permanent workers of the Taratala plant accepting the VRS.The Taratala plant is one of the oldest biscuit manufacturing plant of Britannia in the country, the land of which had been given on lease by erstwhile Kolkata Port Trust (now Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port Trust) to the company more than seven decades ago.*—PTI*

PHOTO: WEBSITE

Gaurav Bannerjee becomes Sony India's CEO

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Sony Pictures Networks India on Monday announced the appointment of former Disney executive Gaurav Banerjee as its Managing Director and CEO, effective on or before August 26, pending regulatory approvals. Banerjee will succeed NP Singh, who will move into the role of Non-Executive Chairman after a 25-year tenure, Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) said in a statement. Singh will move into the new role only after Banerjee takes charge, to support the transition through the end of the fiscal year. Banerjee previously held the positions of Head of Content for Hindi Entertainment & Disney+ Hotstar and Business Head for Star Bharat, Hindi & English Movies, the statement said. *—PTI*

Quant Mutual Fund faces Sebi probe for front-running

Front-running is illegal trading based on info from a broker

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Quant Mutual Fund has said it is being enquired by markets watchdog Sebi and it is fully committed to cooperating with the regulator throughout any review.

The statement came after media reported that Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is investigating Quant Mutual Fund over alleged front- running activities.

As per the reports, the regulator has conducted search and seizure operations at Quant Mutual Fund's office in Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Front-running refers to an illegal practice in the stock market where an entity trades based on advanced information from a broker or analyst before the information is made available to its clients.

In a note to investors late night on Sunday, the fund house said, "recently, Quant Mutual Fund has received inquiries from Sebi, and we want to address any concerns you may have regarding this matter."

The regulator has conducted search and seizure operations at Quant Mutual Fund's office in Mumbai and Hyderabad **PHOTO: PTI**

"We want to assure you that Quant Mutual Fund is a regulated entity, and we are always fully committed to cooperating with the regulator throughout any review. We will provide all necessary support and continue to furnish data to Sebi on a regular and as-needed basis," the fund house said.

- Quant Mutual Fund is one of the fastest growing fund houses in the country with over 80 lakh folios

Quant Mutual Fund is one of the fastest growing fund houses in the country with over 80 lakh folios and more than Rs 93,000 crore assets under management (AUM).

"Our primary goal remains unchanged: to deliver superior risk-adjusted returns to all our valued investors. Your confidence in Quant Mutual Fund is of utmost importance to us, and we are dedicated to maintaining transparency and adherence to regulatory standards," it said. Quant Mutual Fund said that it remains committed to delivering superior risk-adjusted returns in the future too. *—PTI*

Markets settle slightly higher in volatile trade

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Benchmark equity indices ended marginally higher on Monday, helped by buying in bank stocks and firm beginning in European markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 131.18 points, or 0.17 per cent, higher at 77,341.08. In early trade, the benchmark had declined 463.96 points, or 0.60 per cent, to 76,745.94.

Later, it bounced back and jumped 213.12 points, or 0.27 per cent, to 77,423.02 during the day.The Nifty went up 36.75 points, or 0.16 per cent, to settle at 23,537.85.Among the 30 Sensex companies, Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Sun Pharma, Nestle, UltraTech Cement, NTPC, ITC, ICICI Bank, Titan, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, and HDFC Bank were among the biggest gainers.

IndusInd Bank, Adani Ports, Tata Steel, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards.

S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained India's GDP growth forecast for the current financial year at 6.8 per cent and said high interest rates and lower fiscal spur would temper demand.

In its economic outlook for Asia Pacific, S&P Global Ratings said India's economic growth continues to surprise on the upside with the economy growing 8.2 per cent in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled lower while Tokyo ended in the positive territory.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.41 per cent to USD 85.59 a barrel.

Snapping its six-day rally, the BSE benchmark declined 269.03 points, or 0.35 per cent, to settle at 77,209.90 on Friday. The NSE Nifty slipped 65.90 points, or 0.28 per cent, to end at 23,501.10. *—PTI*

EU regulators accuse Apple of breaking digital rules

LONDON, 24 JUNE

European Union regulators accused Apple on Monday of breaking new rules on digital competition by preventing software developers on its App Store from steering users to other venues.

The European Commission said that according to the preliminary findings of its investigation, the iPhone maker had breached the 27-nation bloc's Digital Markets Act.

The rulebook, also known as the DMA, is a sweeping set of regulations aimed at preventing tech giants from cornering digital markets.

The commission, the bloc's executive arm, said Apple's rules for its App Store "prevent app developers from freely steering consumers to alternative channels for offers and content".

Apple Inc said over the past several months, it "has made a number of changes to comply with the DMA in response to feedback from developers and the European Commission".

"We are confident our plan complies with the law," the company said. *—AP*

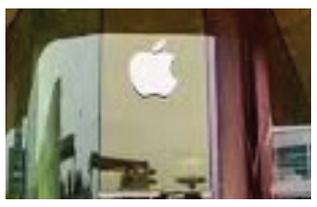


PHOTO: PTI

- The rulebook, also known as the DMA, is a sweeping set of regulations aimed at preventing tech giants from cornering digital markets

Prosus writes off investment in BYJU'S

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Dutch investment firm Prosus has written off USD 578 million (about Rs 4,800 crore) that it invested in edtech firm Byju's, the company said on Monday.

In September 2022, Prosus had lost significant influence on Think and Learn, which owns Byju's brand, as its stake in the edtech firm came down to 9.6 per cent.

"The group accounts for its 9.60 per cent effective interest in BYJU'S at fair value through other comprehensive income. The fair value of BYJU'S investment subsequent to the loss of significant influence is USD 578 million," Prosus said in its annual report for the fiscal year ended 2024.

Prosus is among the four investors that have approached the NCLT against Byju's management and its USD 200 million rights issue.

In November, Prosus valued Byju's below USD 3 billion which was 86 per cent less than edtech firm's peak valuation of USD 22 billion.

In September 2022, Prosus had lost significant influence on Think and Learn, which owns Byju's brand **PHOTO: PTI**

The Dutch firm, on the other hand, recorded growth in its payment arm PayU business.

The consolidated revenue of PayU grew 22 per cent to USD 1.1 billion in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024, driven by the PSP (payment service provider) businesses in Turkey (Iyzico) and India, as well as India credit.

PayU received in-principle authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India on April 23 to operate as a payment aggregator after an embargo of 15 months. The move allows PayU India to onboard new merchants.

"India, the largest market in PayU's PSP business, accounted for 46 per cent of core PSP revenues and 60 per cent of total payments volume (TPV). India grew revenue 11 per cent to USD 444 million, despite being unable to onboard new merchants due to the noted embargo during the year," the report said. *—PTI*

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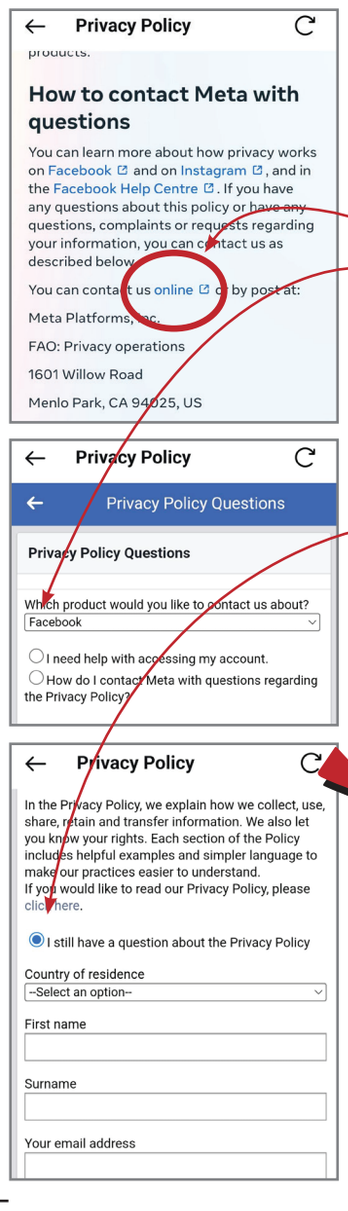
PROTECT YOUR DATA BEFORE META USES IT TO TRAIN AI

Meta will soon start training its AI models using everyone's social media posts. However, Meta claims that it will not use private messages.

For European users, Meta will use public data to teach its Llama AI large language model to reflect "languages, geography and cultural references".

Llama AI is a new version of Meta's language model used to train AI in generating responses to questions and perform tasks.

However, India does not have the right to object to its data being used by Meta. This is due to lack of strict data protection law unlike European Union and the UK.


Privacy Policy
How to contact Meta with questions
You can learn more about how privacy works on Facebook and on Instagram, and in the Facebook Help Centre. If you have any questions about this policy or have any questions, complaints or requests regarding your information, you can contact us as described below:
You can contact us online or by post at:
Meta Platforms, Inc.
FAO: Privacy operations
1601 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025, US
Privacy Policy
Privacy Policy Questions
Privacy Policy Questions
Which product would you like to contact us about?
Facebook
I need help with accessing my account.
How do I contact Meta with questions regarding the Privacy Policy?
Privacy Policy
In the Privacy Policy, we explain how we collect, use, share, retain and transfer information. We also let you know your rights. Each section of the Policy includes helpful examples and simpler language to make our practices easier to understand.
If you would like to read our Privacy Policy, please click here.
I still have a question about the Privacy Policy
Country of residence
--Select an option--
First name
Surname
Your email address

HERE IS HOW YOU CAN COMPLAIN TO META:

- Go to settings in Instagram, tap on 'About'
- Click on Privacy policy and scroll down to 'How to contact Meta with questions'
- Tap on 'contact us online'
- This will take you to a Facebook menu
- Select Facebook/ Messenger/Instagram
- Next, choose "How do I contact Meta with questions regarding the Privacy Policy?"
- Tap on "What should I do if I have other questions about the Privacy Policy?
- Then click on "I still have a question about the Privacy Policy."
- Next, fill in your personal details and send
- Enter the code you receive on your email and click Confirm.
- Fill the captcha
- File your complaint and submit

UPWARD TRAJECTORY

Paytm flight bookings up by 19 per cent in Jan-Mar quarter

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Fintech firm One97 Communications claims to have registered on-year growth of 19 per cent growth in flight bookings in the January-march quarter of this year, the company said in a regulatory filing on Monday.

The travel ticket business of Paytm falls within its marketing services vertical, which grew by 1 per cent in revenue terms to Rs 395 crore on a year-on-year basis in the March 2024 quarter."In the fourth quarter of financial year 2024, Paytm maintained its upward trajectory in market share among OTAs (online travel aggregators), with flight bookings showing a notable year-on-year increase of around 19 per cent, surpassing the industry's growth rate of around 3 per cent," the filing said.Paytm's marketing services business primarily includes ticketing (travel, movie, events etc.), advertising, credit card marketing, and deals and gift vouchers.

The company had posted 28 per cent growth in GMV (gross merchandise value) for ticketing, deals and gift vouchers etc. to Rs 2,804 crore on a year-on-year basis driven by an increase in market share in travel (despite disruption) and higher volumes in the events business.Paytm claims to have recorded around 15 per cent year-on-year rise in international ticket bookings in April. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- The company had posted 28 per cent growth in GMV (gross merchandise value) for ticketing, deals and gift vouchers etc. to Rs 2,804 crore on a year-on-year basis

GROWW REACTS TO FRAUD PLAINT BY CUSTOMERS

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

The market investment app Groww on Monday reacted and clarified a recent social media complaint against it.

The social media post read that customer's money was not deducted, and transaction did not take place. However, the platform credited the amount into the customer's account.

An user alleged that the app had not made any investment in the mutual fund despite taking money. However, in response Groww said that no money was deducted from her account. Grow said on X, "The customer's account was showing an incorrect investment due to a recon issue. The customer never made this investment, and no money was deducted from her bank account." *—Salar News*

'BASELESS ACCUSATIONS'

Hindenburg has tried to defame us: Adani

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Billionaire Gautam Adani on Monday cited record earnings, robust cash positions and the lowest debt ratios to state that his ports-to-energy conglomerate was stronger than ever and its best is yet to come.

Speaking at the annual shareholders meeting of his group's flagship firm, Adani Enterprises Ltd, India's second richest person reflected upon the unprecedented crisis his conglomerate faced last year following a damning report by a US short seller.

"We were faced with baseless accusations made by a foreign short seller that questioned our decades of hard work. In the face of an unprecedented attack on our integrity and reputation, we fought back and proved that no challenge could weaken the foundations on which your Group has been established," said Adani.

Hindenburg Research came out with a litany of findings, accusing the Adani group of stock manipulation, accounting fraud, inflating valuations, siphoning out money and creating a complex web of shell companies that invested in group entities, flouting regulatory norms. Adani Group denied all allegations but this did not prevent its market values from dropping by USD 150 billion at its lowest point.

The report came two days before AEL's Rs 20,000 crore follow-on public offer - the largest ever in India - closed in January 2023.

"Amplified by a segment of vested media, it was designed to defame us, do maximum damage and erode our hard-earned market value," he said, adding that "given the noise", the group returned proceeds from the offering after successfully raising Rs 20,000 crore.

Dwelling upon the strategy, he said the group raised Rs 40,000 crore to cover for debt repayments of the next two years, pre-paid Rs 17,500 crore of margin-linked financing, cut down debt and improved business focus.

He went on to showcase the 30 GW renewable energy park his group is developing at Gujarat's Khavda, in one of the world's toughest deserts, that will be enough to power nations like Belgium and Switzerland, the Dharavi redevelopment that promises to transform the world's largest slum over the next decade, and the development of Drishti 10 Starliner UAV that will help protect the Indian borders. *—PTI*

Gautam Adani reflected upon the unprecedented crisis his conglomerate faced last year **PHOTO: Adani Group**

- The report came two days before AEL's Rs 20,000 crore follow-on public offer - the largest ever in India - closed in January 2023

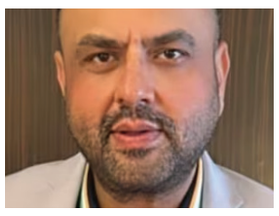


PHOTO: X

New MCA President to be elected on 23 July

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Election for a new president of the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) will be held on 23 July after the incumbent Amol Kale died earlier this month, said the association on Monday. Kale, 47, died of a cardiac arrest in New York after attending the T20 World Cup match between arch rivals India and Pakistan on the intervening of June 9 and 10. Kale was elected as the president of the powerful association after defeating former India cricketer Sandeep Patil in October 2022. To fill the vacant post, the MCA on Monday announced the election programme, according to which the period between 25 June and 2 July has been kept for inviting names of representatives from 'member clubs and from former international players'. *—PTI*

Eng spinner makes record; concedes 38 runs in an over

WORCESTER, 24 JUNE

England spinner Shoaib Bashir made unwanted history on Monday when he conceded 38 runs in a single over in an English county championship match. The 20-year-old Bashir, playing for Worcestershire, was put away for five straight sixes by England teammate Dan Lawrence, playing for Surrey. The sixth ball of Bashir's over was sent so far down the leg side that it went for five wides, and there was worse to follow for Bashir when he overstepped with his next delivery, giving away a no-ball — and therefore two runs — along with a single for Lawrence. With Lawrence off strike, Bashir actually managed a dot ball with his last delivery. It tied the most expensive over in County Championship history. Alex Tudor also conceded 38 runs for Surrey against Lancashire in 1998, with former England allrounder Andrew Flintoff hitting 34 of the runs on that occasion. *—AP*

Tvesa finishes T-25th in Czech Ladies Open golf

BEROUN, 24 JUNE

India's Tvesa Malik shot a bogey free final round of 5-under 67 to finish T-25 at the Tipsport Czech Ladies Open golf tournament here. She was the top Indian among the six who started the week. Tvesa has been slowly but steadily getting back into form as this was her fourth top-30 result, which also included a top-10 at Dormy Open in Helsingborg. After rounds of 71-72, she played very steady and kept bogeys off the card. "It was nice to get a clean card," said Tvesa. Among other Indians, amateur Avani Prashanth (69-70-72) an Vani Kapoor (68-70-73) were both T-33rd while the 2023 champion Diksha Dagar (71-72-70) and Pranavi Urs (71-69-73) were both T-43rd. Ridhima Dilawari (70-72-72) was T-54 as all six Indians made the cut. *—PTI*

India secures Olympic team quotas in archery

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

India secured men's and women's team quotas in archery for this year's Paris Olympics based on the World Archery ranking that was updated on Monday.

India topped the rankings among the non-qualified nations in both men's and women's section to seal their team quotas. India will, thus, be eligible to compete in all the five medal events in Paris -- men's and women's team, individual and mixed categories.

In the men's section, India and China made the cut, while in the women's section Indonesia were the second nation to secure the team Olympic quota.

The team events will have 12 sides in each section, while five teams will compete in the mixed competitions.

For the first time, team quotas are offered to the top-two nations after the three-leg Olympic qualifiers.

The first Olympic Qualifier was held during the World Archery Championships in Berlin last year from where South Korea, Turkey and Japan qualified in men's category; while Germany and Mexico secured their spots in women's division.

The second leg was a continental qualifier. Kazakhstan and South Korea took the men's and women's team quotas respectively from the Asian leg, while Colombia and the United States made the cut from Pan-America.

From the European leg, Italy (men) and the Netherlands (women) secured quotas.

Tarun, Deepika hit a four

Forty-year-old Army veteran Tarundeep Rai, who made his Olympic debut at Athens 2004, will make his fourth Games appearance.

The same is for former world No. 1 Deepika Kumari who will compete in her fourth Olympics on the trot, having made her maiden Games appearance in London 2012. Dhiraj Bommadevara, Ankita Bhakat and Bhajan Kaur will make their Olympic debuts, while for Pravin Jadhav it will be his second successive Games after Tokyo. *—PTI*

India squad

Men: Tarundeep Rai, Dhiraj Bommadevara and Pravin Jadhav

Women: Deepika Kumari, Bhajan Kaur and Ankita Bhakat

India topped the rankings among the non-qualified nations in both men's and women's section to seal their team quotas *PHOTO: X*

UEFA EURO 2024

Germans snatch draw to top the table

Fullkrug's head helps Germany out of trouble

FRANKFURT, 24 JUNE

They all jumped for the ball in a frantic late push for the goal that would save Germany from its first loss at the European Championship, against an impressive Switzerland team.

Defender Nico Schlotterbeck leaped up, next to the even more imposing centre-back Antonio Rüdiger, who reached highest of all. In front of them both was substitute Niclas Füllkrug. The German trio was circled by three Swiss opponents trying to protect a 1-0 lead two minutes into stoppage time. Six pairs of feet off the ground in unison, straining to be the one to head the ball.

It was Füllkrug who won the contest, guiding the ball crossed from another substitute David Raum back across Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer into the top corner of the net. The match

ended 1-1. "We risked a lot in this phase because we could have conceded a second goal," Germany coach Julian Nagelesmann said about throwing his defenders into attack. Germany had already advanced to the round of 16 before kickoff Sunday, but a draw felt like a win in the circumstances and kept the momentum of impressive wins against Scotland and Hungary.

Niclas Fullkrug and Dan Ndoye celebrate after scoring goals *PHOTO: X/@EURO2024*

Switzerland impressed while protecting a 28th-minute goal from Dan Ndoye's clever volleyed shot, and chasing a bigger lead. A second goal was denied by a marginal offside ruling against Ruben Vargas and a fine save by Manuel Neuer from Xhaka's shot.

Ndoye timed his run to meet a floated pass across the goalmouth from his Bologna teammate Remo Freuler. The attack began when Fabian Rieder, making his first start since the 2022 World Cup, won the ball in the German half and then fed Freuler. *—AP*

COPA AMERICA

Uruguay notches 3-1 win against Panama

Uruguay dominate with 20 shots

MIAMI GARDENS, 24 JUNE

Maximiliano Araújo scored when he sent a left-footed shot into the top far corner in the 16th minute, Darwin Núñez and Matías Viña added late goals and Uruguay beat Panama 3-1 in its Copa America opener.

Seeking a record 16th Copa America title, Uruguay dominated with 20 shots, including seven on target. Amir Murillo scored late into stoppage time for Panama. The match drew 33,425 to Hard Rock Stadium, home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. The stadium is the site of the July 14 final and seven games during the 2026 World Cup.

The United States defeated Bolivia 2-0 in Sunday's earlier Group C game at Arlington, Texas. Uruguay plays Bolivia at East Rutherford, New Jersey, on Thursday, when Panama faces the US in Atlanta. The group ends 1 July with a US-Uruguay game at Kansas City, Missouri, and a Panama-Bolivia match in Orlando, Florida. The top two teams move on to the quarterfinals.

Uruguay is tied with Argentina for a record 15 Copa America titles but hasn't advanced past the quarterfinals since winning its last championship in 2011. Panama failed to get past the group phase in 2016, its only previous appearance as a guest at South America's championship.

Araújo scored the first goal after he received a pass from Viña from just outside the penalty area, took a touch and turned. He tapped the ball twice and curled the ball past goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera's outstretched left arm for his second goal in nine international appearances.

Viña boosted the margin to 3-0 with a header from de la Cruz's free kick in the first minute of stoppage time, outjumping defender Abdiel Ayarza for his first international goal. Murrillo spun a defender to beat goalkeeper Sergio Rochet in the fourth minute of stoppage time for his ninth goal. *—AP*

Netherlands player in action after scoring goal *PHOTO: X/@URUGUAYANHEROES*

IT'S GOAT'S BIRTHDAY

Fans celebrate the 37th birthday of Argentina football star Lionel Messi, in Kolkata, Monday. The legendary Argentine footballer Lionel Messi, is often called the 'greatest footballer of all time'. Messi born in Rosario, Argentina, in 1987, recently, won his eighth Ballon d'Or, setting a new record *PHOTO: PTI*

Afghans hope for Aussies' defeat against India

KINGSTOWN, 24 JUNE

Even as the whole nation wants the team India to fray into Semis by defeating Australia, there is another team who wants the Aussies to taste defeat or even the get knocked out of the International Cricket Council (ICC) T20 World Cup 2024. The Afghanistan team will watch the India-Australia clash with bated breath, hoping that the 'Men in Blue' stand on the winning side -- a result which will hand them a golden opportunity to qualify for the T20 World Cup semifinals when they take on Bangladesh in their Super Eights match.

Rohit Sharma and his men are favourites to qualify for the final-four with a net run rate of 2.425 while Australia (0.223) have superior NRR compared to Afghanistan (-0.650). Rashid Khan and Co. will hope India do them a favour by beating Australia so that they enter the clash knowing exactly what they require to do for making the semifinals.

But if Australia wins, it will be an uphill task for Afghanistan to overtake the former champions on NRR. Having said that, Afghanistan will be super high on confidence having exact revenge from Australia for their ODI World Cup loss last year in Mumbai. The Afghans would fancy their chances against a down-and-out Bangladesh, who seemed happy just to progress to the Super Eights.

"To be honest, I don't think we have a chance to play the semi-final anymore after this loss (against India)," senior all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan said on Saturday. *—PTI*

Match starts 6:00 am IST

India's captain Rohit Sharma celebrates after scoring 50 against Australia at Darren Sammy Stadium in Saint Lucia on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Shubman Gill *PHOTO: PTI*

GILL TO LEAD YOUNG INDIA FOR ZIMBABWE TOUR

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Dashing Assam batter Riyan Parag on Monday became the first north-eastern cricketer to get an India call-up as a new-look T20 squad led by Shubman Gill was unveiled for next month's five-match series in Zimbabwe which will not feature any of the senior stars.

The series starting July 6 will be held entirely in Harare.

The national selection committee didn't pick any of the first team players, who are currently playing the T20 World Cup in the West Indies.

All the seniors like Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Suryakumar Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja have been rested after a gruelling three-half months, including the hectic IPL. Even the likes of Shivam Dube, Arshdeep Singh, and Kuldeep Yadav have been given a break. It is believed that the selectors want to broaden the pool of players looking at the 2026 T20 World Cup in India.

The announced squad marks a landmark for 21-year-old Parag, who had a stellar IPL season for the Rajasthan Royals with 573 runs which put him in the reckoning.

He became the first player from his state and region to get a call-up in a senior national team. Joining him from the RR camp were his franchise captain Sanju Samson and Dhruv Jurel as the two wicket-keepers in the side. *—PTI*

AIFF says terminating Stimac's contract was apt

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Monday accused ousted coach Igor Stimac of making attempts to show the country's football fraternity in a bad light in international conferences, saying excuses and failures became emblematic of his tumultuous five-year tenure.

In a strong rebuttal to the series of allegations made against the AIFF by the former men's team head coach, the federation said it left no stone unturned in its effort to provide the gaffer with everything he had asked for to lift the team's performance.

In a long statement, the AIFF said Stimac's sole intention of calling the press conference, four days after his sacking, was to malign the federation. Launching a stinging attack on AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey, Stimac had said the sooner he leaves the post, the better it would be for the future of football in the country, where the globally loved sport is not growing at all.

The AIFF rejected Stimac's claims. "Stimac was given full autonomy to function, including selections of venues, support staff, choice of travel days as per his communication with the team manager. "His specific requests, especially for various support staff of his choice, were always supported by the AIFF in the interests of the national team.

AIFF negotiated with clubs and FSDL (AIFF's commercial partner), to have players released, to give the coach maximum days for preparation, often beyond the FIFA window," the federation said in its defence. *—PTI*

WTA Rankings: Iga tightens grip on No. 1

Florida, 24 June

The top ten in the WTA rankings remained unaltered following the end of the Rothesay Classic in Birmingham and the Berlin Ladies Open. Jessica Pegula won the WTA 500 championship in Berlin, capping the second week of the WTA Tour's 2024 grass swing. Pegula won twice on Sunday, first defeating Coco Gauff in the quarterfinals and then edging Anna Kalinskaya in the final after saving five match points. *—AP*

FORMULA 1

Norris 'happy with 99% of things' but needs extra 1% to beat Verstappen

ROME, 24 JUNE

Lando Norris still has hopes of challenging Max Verstappen for the Formula 1 title this year despite losing out to the Red Bull driver in a grand prix he felt he should have won for a second consecutive time.

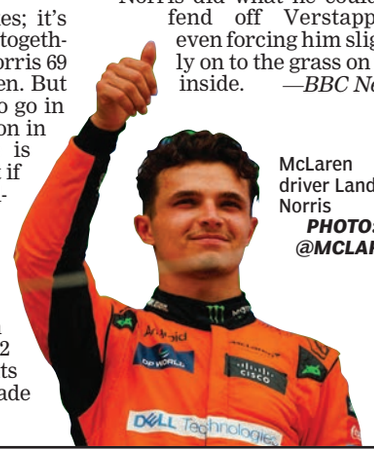
The McLaren driver crossed the line at the end of the Spanish Grand Prix just two seconds behind the world champion.

He added: "We should have got some points back on Max. Potentially there was a chance to beat him in Canada (two weeks ago). Two races I have been second and he has won. "But Max needs to stop winning. He is still extending it at the minute but we cannot afford to let him run away with it. If I made some better decisions in Canada and had made a better start today, we would have won two races.

"We have what it takes; it's just about putting it all together." The result leaves Norris 69 points behind Verstappen. But there are 14 races still to go in this, the longest F1 season in history. A fourth title is Verstappen's to lose, but if anyone is going to challenge him this year, it looks like being Norris.

This was a race decided on fine margins. Norris had taken pole position from Verstappen by just 0.02 seconds. But as the lights went out, Verstappen made a slightly better getaway - enough to have his front wing inside Norris' rear wheels on the run to the first corner.

Norris did what he could to fend off Verstappen, even forcing him slightly on to the grass on the inside. *—BBC News*



McLaren driver Lando Norris *PHOTO: X/@MCLAREN*